



# 25th Anniversary: A Celebration of Learning

## 25 Years Serving Literacy Needs in the Community

I want to start by saying how honoured I am to be the Executive Director of such a wonderful and instrumental organization that has provided service to thousands of learners throughout our 25 years. I am and continue to be proud of all the accomplishments and dedication of our Learners, Staff, Board of Directors and Funders. The Learning Exchange was established in 1984 as a vital part of our community through the efforts of the Human Development Council recognizing that literacy and poverty are linked and as community we need to work on both, hand in hand, before we can see true change. Throughout our 25 years, the Learning Exchange has established and maintained solid partnerships with Government, employers, unions, schools and community groups. These

partnerships are the foundation for growth and change that enable us to take risks and explore other avenues and ways to help individuals move forward in their lives. The Learning Exchange continues to provide quality programming such as GED prep, and literacy upgrading. We have now expanded to provide workplace essential skills training as another pathway for individuals. As a community team, we have implemented a short term workplace essential skills training program, which upon completion, the individuals will move into a full-time living wage job with one of our partnering employers. We as a community knew that things needed to change and be done differently in order to help people succeed and move out of poverty. We understand that we need to do more

than just help people into programming; we need to focus on the end result which is a full-time stable living wage job with support and follow up to aid in the success.

The Learning Exchange is built on the success and achievement of our many Learners. Everyday we see people who want to move forward in their life and we are honoured to play a small role in this change. Seeing people feel better about themselves and having a sense of ownership and pride in what they are doing and accomplishing each day is why we do this work and why it is so important for community organizations to continue to do their work and to drive change forward in the community.

Christina Fowler  
Executive Director

### A Word from the President of the Board—Kate Barnett

Once again the Saint John Learning Exchange has risen to new heights! We are embarking on exciting journeys with new programs, new students

and a fresh perspective on literacy. I speak for all the Board of Directors when I say that we are happy and humbled to be a part of the Learning Exchange's

history and for its bright future!



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*Our Vision is Learn, Achieve, Support, Educate and Respect. I thank each and every one of you for making this a wonderful year and cheers for the years to come!*

Christina Fowler  
Executive Director

The Saint John Learning Exchange

*Knowing is not enough, we must apply  
Willing is not enough, we must do.  
~Goethe~*

# 25 Years of Growth

By: Stacey Doyle, Student Liaison Coordinator

In reflecting upon the Saint John Learning Exchange's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I am inspired by the fact that as many as 5000 people have crossed our door in search of an opportunity to move forward in their lives. In my position, I am fortunate to have the privilege of meeting each and every potential program participant, and have always admired the strength and courage shown in taking that first step towards changing one's life. Because of prior experiences in school, many adults associate education with rejection, failure, fear and dread. That is why I often tell people, "Just getting in the door is half the battle". I am not referring to the difficulty in locating us on Union Street (although that in itself can be quite a feat!), but rather the strength shown by overcoming one's fears. By allowing oneself to be vulnerable in that moment, a most beautiful and momentous thing happens- growth. The growth continues as learners progress into programs to work on improving their skills. Many form relationships with other learners and staff, and find the respect and safety offered here something that allows them to open themselves up to

real learning. Some experience success in a learning environment for the first time. At the same time, it is understood that they are here to reach a goal and get help with taking the next step. There is nothing more fulfilling than knowing we have allowed learners the space and freedom to find their path and reach for their goals, and the confidence to spread their wings and fly when the time is right. I am reminded of a quote by Ben Sweetland: "We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own". Our learners and former learners are our greatest ambassadors, as it is often from them that new referrals for our programs are found, and this "circle of life" has been going on for twenty-five years! Not only am I thankful for the inspiration provided by the courage and perseverance of our learners, without whom the Learning Exchange could not exist, I am also deeply thankful to our predecessors, the 'pioneers' of the Learning Exchange, for the hard work, passion and dedication it has taken to start and keep an organization like this running in the face of economic ups and downs and sometimes devastating cuts in

funding. Congratulations to learners, staff, community and business partners (new and old) on twenty-five years of working together to make a difference!



"In times of change, learners inherit the Earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."

*Eric Hoffer*

## Living Life in the B.E.S.T. Lane! - Janelle Flanagan

As the facilitator for the Basic Education and Skills Training Program (B.E.S.T.), it has been a privilege to assist adults who have the desire to improve their future by maximizing their potential. Representing all walks of life, these adults attend on a full-time basis working towards completion of their GED, fostering of soft skills, and generally moving forward with employment or post-secondary education. The improved self-confidence is the impetus for change.

Using a combination of personalized lesson

plans, group work, field trips and guest speakers, our most noteworthy learning experiences have included :

**Election Coverage** (many of our learners voted for the very first time!)

**Afghanistan Projects** (including sending letters of support overseas)

**City Market Scavenger Hunt**

**UNBSJ Tour** (for many, this was their first visit to our beautiful campus. One learner went on to apply to the Bachelor of Science program

and was accepted!)

**Uptown Walking Tour** (led by David Goss)

**Women's Wellness Conference**

**NB Museum**

**Saint John Free Public Library**

**Imperial Theatre** (complementary performances of To Kill A Mockingbird and Chicago thanks to SJTC)

*(Continued on page 3)*

# Reflections—Maureen Creamer—CALP Facilitator

In September 2008, I started a new job as a C.A.L.P. facilitator (Community Adult Learning Program). As I was becoming familiar with the facility, the resources and the program, returning students provided valuable insight, while new learners accompanied me on the illuminating journey. While most were preparing to write the GED exams, others wanted to increase their literacy skills so they could both help their children with their homework and read and understand notices that their children brought home from school. As the year progressed, students participated in group activities and were informed by guest speakers. Although it did not seem so during the dark days of January, this school year has flown by.

Those new to the program expressed an appreciation for the adult, learner-centered, self-directed program. As they strived to discover their strengths, individual learning styles and goals, they valued the recognition of their unique needs.

Some just needed to review and reinforce literacy and numeracy abilities. Others needed to begin at the beginning to learn the concepts.

One learner, who had passed his GED exams, returned to upgrade his math abilities. Of the many people who have entered and exited the program this year, there are nine who have been attending faithfully since the fall. Of these, at least six will be writing GED exams by the end of 2009. Two others have already exited the program and written, one of whom returned to tell us that she had passed all five exams. The others could now see that the task before them was possible.

This diversity of learner levels and goals remains a challenge to coming together for a group activity. Those attending for two or three half-days per week value and want to productively use every minute they are able to attend. Occasionally the Friday afternoon group would enjoy the challenge of a Scrabble game. While helping with the vocabulary and spelling skills, dictionary use became a regular practice as new words were proposed.

Every journey begins with a tiny step. This cliché becomes real for me everyday as I witness learners overcome obstacles and

break through barriers in their attempts to obtain what so many take for granted: a basic education. In their essay contest submissions, learners thanked their teachers for helping them. However, it is I who owe a debt of gratitude to them for inspiring me daily with their commitment, diligence and tenacity.

## *Mission Statement*

*The Saint John Learning Exchange is a literacy education centre that strives to help people to achieve their goals.*

*We provide a positive and supportive learner-center environment through respect for the individual and self-paced learning programs for adults, youth and families.*

*Through education, community events and partnerships with other organizations, we promote life long learning and the importance of literacy.*

## Living Life in the B.E.S.T. Lane (cont.)

*(Continued from page 2)*

**Alpharoute and The Learning Hub**  
(online courses for adult learners)

**Money Matter\$**

**Learn & Go: Working for Change!**

Several learners from the BEST Program were recognized with outstanding awards and achievements in 2008.

These include:

**The Co-operators Learner Achievement Award:** This award is presented to an adult basic education learner in New Brunswick, as part of the annual Peter Gzowski Invitational Golf Tournament activities. The 2008 award was

presented to Matthew Lennon. Matthew was the youngest ever recipient!

**Self-Esteem: The Key to Wellbeing:** Two learners from the BEST Program successfully completed this six week intensive self-esteem course.

**Bread and Roses Writing Contest:** A piece of poetry written by one of the learners was selected as a winner in this prestigious contest.

The BEST program is one with a strong history of individuals and families impacted by the courageous decision of each learner to reach for their dreams. Unhealthy cycles are broken and lives are transformed. By

equipping these adults with an environment conducive to learning and personal/professional growth, we are contributing to the sustainability of the Saint John community.



(L-R) Hon Ed Doherty, Christina Fowler, Matthew Lennon, Janelle Flanagan at The Co-operators Learner Achievement Award Ceremony.

## TIES 2 Work

Helps build a positive attitude in self and others.  
Norm

TIES help build confidence and spirit for your new work place(s) John

TEAM—Together Everyone Achieves More. Cindy

Live to Learn ,  
Learn to live .  
Mark

Be open to changes and opinions because there is always room for improvement.  
Melissa

Teamwork is a big circle that needs both halves to be complete.  
Bill

## SJLE's Newest Program

## TIES 2 Work

The TIES 2 Work is based on the 9 Essential Skills proven to be used in all occupations. The program offers guaranteed employment for those with or without Grade 12 / GED, who possess the Essential Skills relevant for a particular job. This has been possible by committed employers signing onto our program.

As facilitators for the TIES 2 Work Program we have seen:

- \* increased motivation in the clients due to the promised job paying close to the living wage in Saint John

- \* individual change in attitude due to the safe and non-judgmental atmosphere of the program

- \* a sparkle in the eye that denotes a sense of relief and excitement knowing that a job awaits them that pays more than minimum wage

- \* a sense of belonging and ownership for the involvement in naming the *TIES 2 Work Program*

**Short Term Training**  
**Long Term Employment**

Chris Squire  
Sheri McAulay  
Facilitators

## Courage—Jennifer Bailey

Courage is a powerful thing to possess, and means a great deal to me. Courage isn't just an action; it's an ability to conquer fear. It's when you stand up for your or someone else's rights when nobody else will. I only wish I had a lot more courage.



Courage is going back to school when people always told you that you're too old to do that now. Courage is going for your license even though you're scared. If you didn't possess any courage, then you would lack character. I feel envious towards people who are risk takers because they are the most courageous people.

*"Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts."*  
~Winston Churchill~

## Night CALP—Ginny Hooper, Facilitator

The Sheree Fitch Adult Learner/Student Scholarship Award Ceremony was held on April 17, in Fredericton. Adult Learners from across New Brunswick were asked to send in their submissions in the hope of being one of the ten learners chosen to receive a Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick scholarship. Well known former New Brunswicker, author Sheree Fitch is the honorary chair and presents these awards. Two of this year's winners attend The Saint John Learning Exchange night classes—Tracy Berube and Ricky Marr. The two learners, accompanied by their spouses and myself, attended the at times, emotional ceremony at Saint Thomas University Conference Centre. Each winner's story was read, after which each was presented with their award. They also received a copy of Ms. Fitch's novel

“The Gravesavers”, which is in the process of being turned into a movie script. The learners' stories were full of courage, perseverance, heartache and triumph—all different yet all having a similar thread



Sheree Fitch presenting Tracy Berube with his award

that resonated throughout— **“NEVER LOSE HOPE, - YES YOU CAN!”**

Ms. Fitch took a little from each learners' story and incorporated it into her address as well as writing in each learners' book a little something she took from each of their stories.

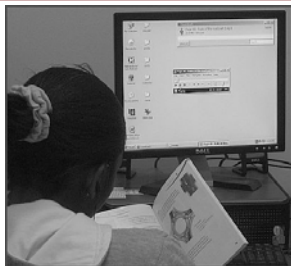
It was a very inspiring day, not only for the learners but for all who attended, after all, we are all life-long learners.

*“Yeamer and learner  
An ever beginner!  
Hope is my teacher  
Life is my school.”*

*~Sheree Fitch*

## Basic Adult Education 2.0 Wendell Dryden, CALP Facilitator

The provision of quality, updated computers in our CALP classrooms is one kind of support the Saint John Learning Exchange receives from the Province of New Brunswick. In my program, we use these machines every day.



### Computer Literacy

Word processing, the creation of charts and spreadsheets, and desktop learning games have long been part of our adult learning programs. We help people learn the basics of mouse and keyboard use, and help them learn to open and close programs. We show them tutor programs and learning games, and help them use tools like spell- and grammar-check. This produces samples of learner writing like this:

I like the computer because I'm learning. I'm starting to learn how to manage money some what because of the game call the money game I use the game on my computer. I'm also learning how to spell some more new words to on the computer as well.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## To be a Partner with the Saint John Learning Exchange Cathy Wright, Vibrant Communities

My interest in helping people with learning started when I was a university student helping a young boy in school. This inspired me to volunteer one on one with adults who wanted to improve their reading and writing skills and as time went on it was clear we needed more to offer people.

Opportunities really changed when we received a call from the Federal Government in the 1984 asking if we wanted to have a pilot project with funding for three years to set up an adult learning and literacy organization. Did we ever – yes our community wanted this!! I don't remember who called, but I even still

remember where I was sitting!

Through the Human Development Council, organizations and individuals rallied around to develop the Learning Exchange. What was especially wonderful was that there was funding to learn from great

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Basic Adult Education 2.0 (cont.) Wendell Dryden, CALP Facilitator

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This year, with updated computers and improved internet access, my classes have made even greater use of our computers, including the use of many internet services and resources.

### Email

This past year, I helped eight learners set up an email account for the first time. These and other learners use their emails to stay in touch during vacation breaks or over short leaves. Some also use email as an alternative to calling in when they are unable to attend. Beyond basic contact, email allows facilitators to send web links to online services and learning games, and to send and receive attached documents for at-home assignments.

Email provides opportunity for responsive journal writing: where once facilitator and learner would write back and forth in a learner's journal, they can now exchange emails. This provides opportunity to discuss word-use, grammar and spelling, as well as email etiquette and related problem solving. We have also helped learners use

their email to contact schools, employers and government agencies.

### Online Job Search and Application

This year, so far, four pre-GED learners have successfully used the internet to secure employment. In two of those instances, learners came to the Learning Exchange specifically for this kind of help.

Learners often need help using the job bank and, sometimes, choosing which job bank to use. I have also helped learners with writing email "cover-letters" and learning how to create and store an online resume. This skill-set will become increasingly important as more employers require "application by email only."

### Computer Literacy 2.0

Facebook recently counted its 200 millionth user. Helping learners with Facebook means helping them fill in forms and navigate the site's security and privacy settings. These skill-sets have applications beyond Facebook and counts as part of

what it means to be computer literate.

Meanwhile, other uses we have found for the computers include: using Google Earth to understand geography, geology and seasonal changes; accessing English-language newspapers from around the world; watching web-hosted video clips of Canadian and world history; finding facts, names and dates through online reference tools. I have also used the audio-visual capabilities of the computer to record portions of text - such as the NB Driver's Handbook - in an mp3 format for learners to use in class or at home.

In the "Web 2.0" world, being a wise computer user requires knowing how to keep applications up to date, and knowing when to say "no" to online solicitation. Learners also need to make basic purchasing decisions, choose internet service providers, and know when to disconnect. These are all things we can help them with now that adult literacy and basic adult education has come to include basic computer and internet skills and information.

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## The individualized learning method –Heather Doyle, CALP Facilitator

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All of the learners that come to the evening GED program are as unique as their fingerprint, and because of this each learner must work with a facilitator to develop their own unique learning plan. At which point along the lifelong journey of learning an individual may be is dependant on all of the past experiences that have brought them to where they are today.

Individualized learning is based on the theories of behaviourist psychology, which

states that people learn best in small structured steps and benefit most from reinforcement for each success. In the evening GED class, individualized learning methods are those in which learners work directly with prepared materials at their own pace, receiving information about their progress at regular intervals.

It is important to remember that the social aspect of learning is sorely missed when it is not available, and interaction

should be incorporated into individualized programs. People can still work independently at their own pace, but get together to discuss common problems or just share stories about the process.

*Today*

*Is a great day,*

*To LEARN*

*Something NEW!*

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To be a Partner with the Saint John Learning Exchange (cont.)  
Cathy Wright, Vibrant Communities

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(Continued from page 5)

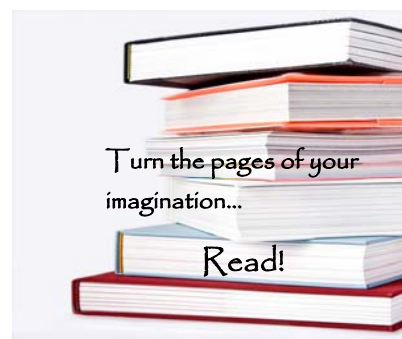
programs across the country to make sure we had a great program in Saint John ...and we do.

Learners and staff at the Learning Exchange have helped me through the years, most recently with Vibrant Communities, understand what

works and what changes in our community and in our government are needed. It is a great friendship and why I am proud to be a partner and a friend.

Thank you!

Cathy Wright



## Winning Essay by Ricky Marr

My name is Ricky Marr, I have been attending evening classes at Saint John Learning Exchange for 7 months.

I am attending this class so I can read and spell words to my kids. It will be real nice to get my G.E.D. too. It would make me feel more of a dad and a man.

What public school was like for me when I went was very hard because at the time I could not read or spell at all. Later on when I got older some of it came to me, but now in my class room I feel real good and in the end I will get my G.E.D.

My life before I started here at school it was hard because I couldn't spell and I think I am getting some of it now. Getting a job even just getting by was very hard for me.

Attending this class has helped me as to be proud of me that I am trying to do better in my life. When I first saw the flyer about classes here the sentence that stuck home for me was—to be able to write what is in your heart not just what you can spell. Because of that one sentence I finally made the decision to go through the door and admit to someone that I could not spell, that I needed help. I made it through the

intake assessment but my first night of class I just sat outside in my truck debating whether to go in or not. I was so nervous and shy. I am really glad that I did not stay in my truck that night as I met some real nice



*Ricky Marr accepting his award from Sheree Fitch*

people and wonderful teacher who with all their help have let me not feel so bad about my not being able to spell. This has allowed me to focus more on all learning and not getting hung up on one part of learning (my spelling)

I also have experienced new things—places that I would never have done or gone to

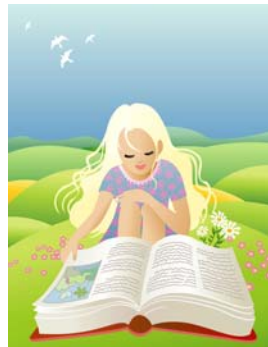
before. We were given tickets to see a musical at the Imperial Theatre, I had never been inside there before or been to any plays. I sat outside the theatre in my truck thinking I don't fit in there—I can't go in there—I don't belong. Then I saw a learner from my class and he joined me in the truck and we talked about how I felt. Then I saw my teacher go in and I saw her looking for us in the lobby so I felt I had to go in because I didn't want to disappoint her. It was another door in my life that I'm glad I opened! Our classroom is a safe spot you don't have to hide that you may not know the answer but with a team effort you can all find the answer together.

My future plan is to get good in my spelling and reading and in time my G.E.D. When I get my G.E.D. I know that I will get a good job that I like and will pay well. I want my kids to see that if you work hard for what you want you will get it in the end.

*"My first night of class I just sat outside in my truck debating whether to go in or not."*

## DREAMS

**D**on't put limits on yourself. So many dreams are waiting to be realized. Decisions are too important to leave to chance. Reach for your peak, your goal, your prize.



**A**d mire your accomplishments. Large or small, tremendous or tiny, they contribute to the well-being of this world. A little light somewhere makes a brighter light everywhere. A speck of sand can turn into a pearl.

## THE SAINT JOHN LEARNING EXCHANGE

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*We Bring Literacy to Life*

Check out our website!  
[www.sjle.org](http://www.sjle.org)

### Special Thanks to our Funders & Financial Supporters

#### Funders

- ◆ Post-Secondary Education Training & Labour—Employment Division
- ◆ Post-secondary Education Training & Labour—Community Adult Learning Services Branch
  - ◆ Department of Social Development

#### Financial Supporters

- ◆ Innovatia
- ◆ United Way of Greater Saint John
  - ◆ Aliant
- ◆ Greater Saint John Community Foundation

Thanks to those who have donated to the Learning Exchange over the past 25 years.

## Programs & Services

**(BEST)** - an employment preparation program that assists youth and adults with self-development skills, pre-employment skills, GED preparation and general upgrading.

**Community Adult Learning Program (CALP)** - this program provides basic literacy and numeracy skills to learners of various levels. For many it involves upgrading preparation for writing General Education Diploma (GED) tests and entering Community College programs.

**Homework School** - Children often need additional one-on-one help, or a quiet, calm and safe place to focus on their homework. They come to the Learning Exchange for assistance in Math, English, Social Studies, Science and Health. This program is aimed at children in grades 1 - 8 and is generously supported by Aliant.

**Learnex** - Individualized educational and training opportunities for adults in the workplace, offered on a fee-for-service basis.

**TIES 2 Work (Training in Essential Skills)** - an innovative community partnership assisting individuals in short term workplace essential skills training leading to full-time living wage employment. This unique program matches the needs of local employers with individuals in our community seeking employment.

**Reading Rocks** - is an interactive show featuring puppets, ventriloquism and magic for elementary and pre-school students. Our Reading Rocks Program helps foster a love for reading through entertainment, as well as encourages children to make time each day to spend with a favorite book. This program is generously supported by The Greater Saint John Community

Foundation.

**Fuel the Brain** - a healthy snack program for our learners, emphasizing the importance of proper nutrition and the link between learning and healthy choices. This program assists our learners who struggle financially in purchasing nourishing snacks. This program is gener-

*A Special Thank-You to:*

*Cathy Wright*

*&*

*James Wilson*

*For their generous donation of the poppy photograph—100% of proceeds will go to support the Learning Exchange.*