

The BUZZ on Literacy

Literacy Now, South Okanagan--Similkameen



February
2011

Volume 4, Issue 2

Dates to Note:

- **Grandparents & Grandchildren:** Penticton Museum, Feb. 10, at 10:30am
- **Healthy Living Fair:** Visit our reading tent & kids' book swap. Convention Centre, Saturday, Feb. 26
- **Making it Clear:** FREE plain language workshop. Register with LitNow (below). Mar. 3, 1pm to 3pm
- **Starbucks at Cherry Lane** offers story-time for preschoolers, Sundays, 10am

Committees:

Family: Next meeting Feb. 10

Health: Next meeting Feb. 23

Adult /Workplace: Next meeting Mar. 10

Interested in joining one of our committees?

Contact us!

250.462.0636 or

literacynowat@gmail.com

Amazing employers

Reading, Writing and Work

It's easy to see why the Osoyoos Home Hardware has been called "the best in Canada." It's not just a store, it's a destination. People who drop in are treated like neighbours.

The staff welcomes their guests (often by name), and it's not unusual for them to offer a beverage and snack. Literacy Now was there to present their boss, Frances Sologuk, with an award. Frances is an amazing example of how an employer can help people with literacy problems. One of these employees is Zech. When he

arrived from Sudan, he spoke no English.

Frances and her staff helped Zech to get comfortable working with stock, and he gradually



Frances, Zech & Naomi

moved to assisting customers. To help Zech build his English skills, Frances also encouraged him to go to Okanagan College for tutoring. Eventually Zech moved to Pen-

ticton so he could go to college, commuting to Osoyoos for work.

Frances says employing people with challenges hasn't always been easy, but the results speak for themselves. Her employees become family and want to stay, and her customers sense the difference this makes. "You take care of the people and create a comfortable, satisfying atmosphere," she says. "That leads to business success." With about 40 percent of Canadian adults reading below the

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Grandparents & Grandchildren: Connecting Generations

Starting soon, grandparents can bring their grandchildren to talk and play, learn something new, and enjoy a snack together.



Grandparents, we would like to know how to make this program right for you and your family. Please come to our first meeting and tell us what you think.

Our information meeting is on Thursday, February

10 at 10:30 a.m., at the Penticton Museum (in the library building). Children are welcome, and snacks will be provided.

For more information, contact Naomi Ludington at 250.462.0636. ❖



For information about items in this newsletter or literacy programs & services, or to apply for funding for literacy projects, please contact: Naomi Ludington 250.462.0636 literacynowsos@gmail.com.

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level needed in today's workplace, Frances and her team are a great example of how to work through these challenges.

Literacy Now is always on the lookout for employers' success stories. In 2009, we heard about how the Penticton Best Western helped a staff member who could not read.

The supervisor, Rhonda Allercott, usually gave her housekeeping staff a checklist of the 60 duties to perform in each room. Rhonda's very practical solution: she simply created another version of the same checklist using pictures instead of words.

Support for employers

Often, employers don't realize some of their workers are having problems on the job just because they don't read well. It is a common problem, but it isn't easy to talk about so it's often kept hidden.

Employees may cope well but seem to disregard written instructions or warnings; they may also refuse promotions. Often, if the written work becomes too overwhelming, they quit.

When an employer thinks an employee is struggling to read, Literacy Now can help start the conversation and provide information about suitable programs. We have easy-to-use tools, like a

"workplace audit" which can help employers and organizations identify where literacy issues may be affecting their workplace.

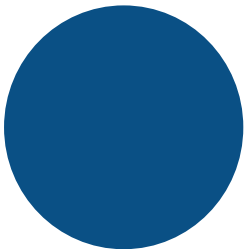
And we offer solutions, like a plain language workshop which can help employers and organizations make all of their written communication easier to understand. Our next free workshop is March 3. (Space is limited, so sign up soon.)

Most of this support is free. Its value: priceless.

Want to share a workplace literacy success story, or nominate an employer for recognition? We'd love to hear from you. Our Contact info is in the green box, left. ❖

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

literacynowsos.ca



Partners in literacy:

Okanagan College

In the South Okanagan and Similkameen, organizations and individuals are working together to support literacy. Literacy Now helps coordinate and support their efforts.

Mary Kiviste works in the college's adult tutoring program, and says participating in Literacy Now enriches the work she does.

"When I began to work in the literacy field, I noticed sometimes my learners wouldn't be able to make their commitment to meet with tutors because of health issues," she says. "Our students seemed to

have noticeably more health issues than the general public. I wanted to know more."

Mary attended a conference on health literacy in Calgary, and she has been regular member of the Literacy Now SO-S health committee. She discovered that her observation was correct: Literacy level is the strongest predictor of an individual's health status.

While she's contributing her expertise to the committee, Mary's participation with also ensures that the other partner groups are aware of the college's free programs



for adult

learners: one-to-one tutoring programs and group sessions geared toward improving reading and math skills.

OC's **English as a Second Language Settlement Program** provides free one-to-one English language support to eligible adult immigrant and refugee newcomers. In Osoyoos call toll free 866.510.8899 ext 3244.

In Keremeos, contact Andrea Massing at 250.499.2352 ext 109. ❖