



CHASING THE DREAM

By Lois Kamenitz

Have you ever felt that you should have gone further with your education? That you were capable of more? Here is my story of chasing that dream. At the age of 70, after a long career in education, I finally believed in myself enough to trust that I could make a long-held dream a reality. In 2016 I returned to university to pursue a PhD. It had taken me thirteen years of night school to obtain a BA. The Master's degrees that followed took less time because I could take time away from work or I had already retired. And, most importantly, there was the "tuition fee waiver" the university I attended offered to students 60 years of age or older for one undergraduate and graduate degree. That waiver made it financially possible for me to pursue further university studies. In September I will begin the fourth year of my doctoral program. At my age I have far fewer years ahead than behind me and I have chosen to live my remaining years answering what in the second half of life, "my soul asks of me." Despite what we so often hear, there is no one right way to age.

I have chosen to research older women learners who have, within the last five years, acquired a PhD. While the focus of my research is on the stories the women tell about their

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IS "THANK YOU" STILL IMPORTANT?

BY LISA TRUDEL

Thank you. Merci.
Gracias. Dank u.

Whatever language you speak, expressing thanks is always important. When you are job searching, thank you is a common courtesy and professional business etiquette, and might even put you ahead of other candidates.

According to a recent survey on www.monster.com 1 in 5 hiring managers will

automatically dismiss an applicant if they have not sent an interview thank you email. The same study revealed that 80% of Human Resources recruiters consider thank you emails helpful for reaching the final hiring decision and yet another survey by www.careerbuilder.com showed that 3 out of 4 job seekers do not send thank you emails.

Therefore, sending a thank you email after a job interview is a critical piece of your job search plan. Your thank you email might not guarantee you will get the job, however sending a thank you does not indicate that it is not worth sending. A thank you email

contributes to the overall picture of who you are as a contender. It signals interest by showing that you went home, processed everything you learned in the interview and decided that you are still enthusiastic about the position. This can still matter to a potential employer.

Here are 7 tips for thank you emails:

1) Use a clear subject line. Include the phrase "thank you", your name and the title of the job you interviewed for. For example: "Thank you from Lisa Trudel, candidate for Career Specialist position".

2) Keep your email brief and polite. Be concise and reiterate your interest in the position and remind the interviewer of your qualifications. Your email should provide links to your online presence such as LinkedIn which might help with a final decision.

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WHO IS THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO DISTRICT?

The Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto District (LDATD) is a center of excellence in providing supports to people with learning disabilities and or/ AD(H)D since 1971. LDATD is committed to creating a society in which people with Learning Disabilities and or AD(H)D are able to achieve the full expression of their intellect and abilities while contributing their fullest in the workplace.

To achieve this goal LDATD provides programs and services to people of all ages who are affected by learning disabilities and AD(H)D. LDATD offers social skills programs for children and youth, after school tutoring, recreational programs for children and youth, keyboarding/assistive technology programs, parent and educator workshops, newcomer settlement services, employment programs, adult support groups, information and referral services and much more.

What is a Learning Disability?

A learning disability is an invisible, distinct, lifelong, neurological condition found in individuals with average to above average intellectual potential. Learning disabilities affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or non verbal information.

Approximately 1 in 10 Canadians live with a learning disability - including children, youth, adults and seniors.

Learning Disability and the Newcomer experience

The Settlement Program Learning Abilities

Services Hub (S.P.L.A.S.H) has been serving newcomer clients with a spectrum of LD's since starting operations in June 2017. S.P.L.A.S.H Staff works hard to continually spread awareness about learning disabilities in the newcomer community by building relationships with local agencies and community organizations.

Newcomers with LD's and/or AD(H)D require extra help in all facets of their settlement experience. Our settlement team strives to offer informed and effective supports by connecting newcomers to beneficial resources and services, for example - We offer a safe and inclusive space where newcomers are able to practice essential skills (social, language, employment and cultural) that enhance their settlement process, listed below are a few examples:

- One to one specialized settlement counselling & referrals
- English Conversation circles with specialized delivery options
- Career and Labor Market Information sessions
- Art/creative workshops
- Cooking lessons to promote healthy eating
- Recreational/Educational field trips to promote a healthy lifestyle

At LDATD we know that all learners have diverse abilities and that they can demonstrate their knowledge in unique ways. Encouraging us to further enhance our settlement services for newcomers with LD's, through the formation of community partnerships, delivery of educational presentations about LD's (learning styles, learning strategies), active

participation in local fairs, events/forums and conferences - allowing us to create innovative settlement programming and empowering newcomer clients and their families in every aspect of their settlement journey.

Employment Programs for Adults with Learning Disabilities

LDATD also offers a strengths based employment program titled "The Learning Disabilities Empowered Employment Project" (LDEEP) for newcomers and Canadian citizens. LDEEP combines several weeks of intensive in-class learning, computer access, individualized consultation on career, professional progress, growth and employment, with post-program supports to those active in labor force. The LDEEP program collaborates with champion employers to provide paid on the job training, increasing technical and workplace communication skills, self-esteem, expanding networks and acquisition of job and sector knowledge.

Some of LDEEP's highlights include:

- 100% of participants enhanced employability
- Currently 87% of participants are employed, self-employed or returning to school
- Job coaching / tailored facilitation for integration into workplace, job maintenance and retention.

LDATD Programming for Youth and Children

LDATD offers a wide array of specialized programming for children and youth with

individualized support geared towards each participant's unique learning style.

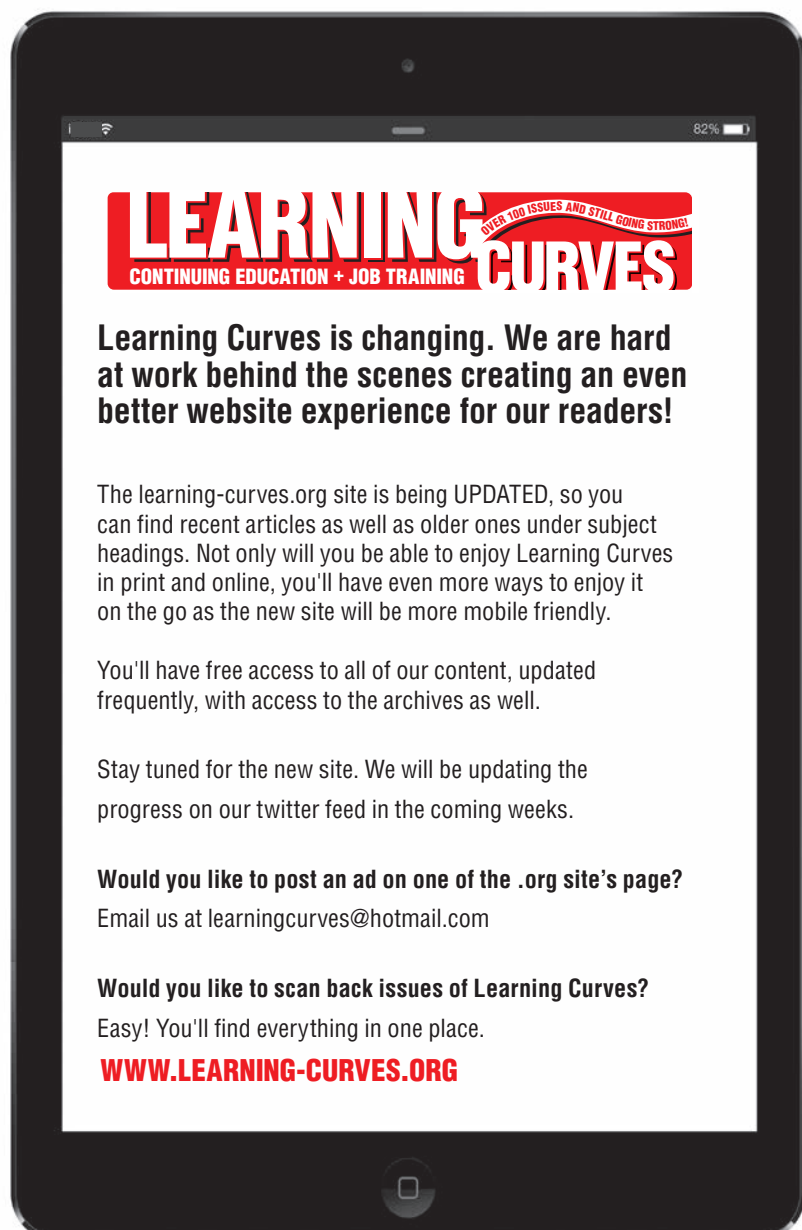
Below is a list of programming: Please visit the LDATD website to get more detailed information about each program.

- Social Skills: Friendship club, Youth Empowerment Leadership Program, Youth Group at YMCA Academy
- Typing and Assistive Technology: Keyboarding for kids, Keyboarding for teens, Assistive Technology Training
- Smart Kidz Tutoring
- Yoga and Mindfulness for kids and youth
- Free sports, Social skills and Afterschool programs: JUMP 2 SUCCESS, S.T.Y.L.E Program
- Youth Empowerment - Youths' Initiative and Excellence with LD's (Y.I.E.L.D)
- Full day March Break and Summer Camps

The Board of Directors, staff and volunteers at LDATD are committed to helping and making a difference in the lives of every adult, child and senior with a learning disability. To learn more about our services, please visit our website www.ldatd.on.ca or give us a call at 416-229-1680,

If you are looking for something fun to do on a Saturday afternoon, join us on June 8th for our annual fundraiser called "Bowl-Abilities". It is an afternoon filled with bowling, pizza, music, fun activities for kids and lot's & lot's of prizes!!

Please see the ad opposite this page and hope to see you there!



DON'T WAIT TILL AFTER LABOUR DAY TO REGISTER FOR THE FALL TERM CLASSES.

If you wait, the class may be full or cancelled for the lack of a few more registrations.

Registrations for the Fall Term 2017 start in July and some in August

Information Sessions for the 2017-2018 year are held in August

Call to find out dates now!



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Phone: 416-229-1680 Fax: 416-229-1681 Email: admin@ldatd.on.ca Website: www.ldatd.on.ca

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BUDGETS ARE PLANS

(THEN THERE IS WHAT REALLY HAPPENS)

BY WENDY TERRY

We all make plans but then life happens. For adult students who count on the government plans set out in budgets, policy statements and election campaigns, they are often not quite sure what help will actually be there for them.

Below, I made a chart of articles Learning Curves has done over the past three years on federal/provincial budgets, reports of advisory groups and election platforms. Within these descriptions we have looked at how different levels of government, including the municipal government, support adult learning. These stories can be found by going to www.learning-curves.ca and looking for that specific issue.

Then life happens. For instance, the adult learning opportunities in each municipal councillor’s ward are of secondary importance to them as adult education is seen as largely provincially funded and developed. But adult education is more about what is locally accessible as adults rarely pick up and move to take a program of study away from where they work and their kids go to school. So Learning Curves encouraged you to ask councillor candidates about your adult learning needs

In the last Municipal election October 22, life happened. Instead of 47 wards being represented by councillors in Toronto, the number was reduced by the province to 25 mid-election, and now these 25 only have time to deal with provincial funding cuts never mind adult education opportunities in their ward.

Then life happened provincially. For a number of years we had a Premier, Kathleen Wynne, who was an adult educator, had taught ESL, and had a M.Ed in Adult Education from the

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. In every elected position she held ,as school trustee, Minister of Education, Premier , she organized specific studies on adult education provision. When she thought about education she also thought adult education. Now Wynne is gone and we have Ford whose focus is on cutting to reduce the deficit. Dare we ask about plans for adult education, which is usually off the radar, to bring it on the radar, perhaps to be then seen as a place to cut?

Now what will happen to the plans of the Liberal Federal government for training, post election this fall? If they win, will they carry on with their plans, if they don’t win, will a new government follow their plans? Not likely. One has to remember Canada is a federation and each province (10) and territory (3) has different agreements with the federal government around policy to do with training, (a federal mandate), education (a provincial mandate), the environment, and so on. Life has happened recently as Alberta and Ontario have elected Conservative governments. They are not going along with the Liberal federal government on the environment, will they go along with the existing federal provincial labour force agreements. If we have a Conservative federal government. What will be their plans for training?

What are the Liberal plans laid out in their most recent 2019 budget? To offer the Canadian Training Benefit is the one plan described. Note if you go online to see the Canada 2019 Budget, you will find that it is written in plain language and clearly explained unlike most previous budget write ups. The Canada Training Benefit would give workers a credit balance of \$250 a year up to a lifetime

limit of \$5000. Your credit balance would be shown on the information the Canada Revenue Agency sends you each year. You can use this credit to refund the costs of taking a course. That is the money. What about the time? There are leave provisions planned, like maternity leaves. You would not have to give up your job to go back to school. Mind it further states “The Government intends to consult with provinces and territories on the design of the new Canada Training Benefit.” That could take a while.

They also plan a new Employment Insurance Training Support Benefit, which would provide workers with up to four weeks of income support through the Employment Insurance (EI) system. Where can you find a four week course you ask? Well, Sheridan offers four week courses in computers over the summer see page 9 for story and ad. And to be sure, if there is an adult education market that has increased support to attend, you can be assured other educational providers will tailor their offerings. Think of the expansion in Second Career offerings with the development of this provincial program. Mind they do not they expect to launch in late 2020, that is a year past this fall 2019 election.

Perhaps the Canada Job Benefit Plan was presented clearly in graphics as it is more of an election platform than a plan that will be 100% for sure implemented. It depends on who gets elected to run the federal government this fall.

Last year’s 2018 federal budget looks much different but the chance that what was written up has been implemented is more likely. In the Skills for Tomorrow’s Economy section there is a section on Improving the Quality of Career Information and Program results. Now here is where government gobbledegook kicks in. They will support an Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Linkage Platform, got that? They explain that it “will help to better track and make available important labour market information.”

Mind this platform will also be used “to monitor government programs and to ensure they are achieving their objectives.” What does that mean for you? Well, if you have ever applied to the provincial Second Career program for support to retrain after being laid off, you will know that you must pick a program that will train you work in a labour market shortage area or you will not be funded. So their objective, train people to fill labour market shortages as identified in the Platform.

The 2019 budget paper goes on to a section titled Progress on Lifelong Learning. They note that government has made progress on it’s 2017 Budget commitments to enhance student aid. We quote “ It has expanded eligibility

for Canadian Student Grants and Loans for part-time students and for full- and part- time students with children, and introduced a three year pilot project that will provide adults returning to school on a full-time basis after several years in the workforce with an additional \$1,600 in grant funding per school year.” Learning Curves always recommends our readers to ask the financial services office if there is any help. There often is. And starting in August 1, 2018 the help described above is available.

In the 2017 Federal Budget which Learning Curves detailed in their Eall 2017 issue, we noted you could take a course and not be cut off EI. This was again noted in the Progress on Lifelong Learning in the 2018 Budget, it refers to the federal process of implementation in Canada. “ The Government has also made progress with provincial and territorial partners to promote and expand the use of Employment Insurance (EI) flexibilities to ensure that unemployed adults who pursue self-funded training are able to keep their EI benefits.”

As this change has been put place starting with the 2017 Budget, we have hopes that being able to take a course while on EI, one you choose and pay for, will not result in your being but off EI as you would have been before, no matter who gets elected this fall.

Don’t forget to ask the federal candidates who come knocking on your door what their plans are for lifelong learning programs and tell them what would help you.

One thing Learning Curves promotes is Learning Information services for adults. The Building the Workforce Report of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility is the report of the Premier’s Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel and it identified this learning information problem in June 2016. Actually those who spoke to them did, the panel heard that there were learning information needs and career path needs. They heard that individuals were not aware of the full array of education and career opportunities available to them. We wrote this report up in detail in our Fall 2016 issue.

In our Fall 2017 issue we noted that Finland has Learning Information Centres. We noted, “Within these Finnish Centres they have labour market training information but the hook in for the adult is their idea to take a course- learning information- as Step 1. Planning a Career Pathway may grow from looking for a course but as Step 2.”

Why not ask your federal candidates who come knocking on your door if they would add learning information centres into Employment Ontario Centres?

www.learning-curves.ca	Federal plans	Provincial plans	Municipal support
Summer 2019		Budgets are plans and then there is the reality.	
Fall 2018 page 17			Oct. 22 is E Day Ask about AE issues before you vote.
Summer 2018 page 5		Adult Education Policy Statements from our Provincial Political Parties	
Fall 2017 page 15	Good News for Adult Learners the Ontario and Canadian Government Budgets	Good News for Adult Learners the Ontario and Canadian Government Budgets	
Fall 2016 page 16		Finally Learning and Workforce Information Services for Adults. The Premier’s Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel Report	

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IS “THANK YOU” STILL IMPORTANT?

- 3) Refer to something specific from the interview. Identify what is particularly interesting to you about the position and explain why. This helps to make your email personalized and by referring to your skills you are showing how you are going to use them to help the employer achieve what they want.
- 4) End your email by stating the established deadline. Let the interviewer know you can provide additional information and remind them about the deciding time limit that was hopefully confirmed at the interview.
- 5) Proofread more than once. Just like your cover letters, resumes, and business emails, thank you emails require perfect spelling and grammar. Always review your writing before hitting the “send” key.
- 6) Send it within 24 hours. Whether your email is to one interviewer or to all the interviewers on the hiring panel, send your thank you as soon as possible.
- 7) Use a professional thank you email format. Here is an example of a thank you email. This is only an example; you will need to tailor your email to reflect your circumstances.

Subject Line:

Thank you from Lisa Trudel, candidate for Career Specialist position

*Dear Hiring Manager (if you have their name be sure to use it)
It was a pleasure speaking with you today about the Career Specialist position with the Centre for Education and Training. Your job is an excellent match for my skills and qualifications.*

The structured and user-friendly approach of your in-house database that you described, confirmed my desire to work with you. In addition to my enthusiasm, I can contribute professional level writing skills, education in Career Counselling, an interest in sharing resources with colleagues and a commitment to help you achieve your annual contract goals.

I appreciate the time you took to interview me and if you need additional information that will assist with your decision-making process, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this opportunity by the end of next week as discussed.

*Sincerely,
Lisa Trudel (your name)
Email address
LinkedIn link*

To find out more about how to write a thank you email, and how to make your job search successful, contact your local Employment Ontario Career Centre.

This article was submitted by Lisa Trudel, Career Specialist with the Centre for Education and Training. She works at their Parliament Employment Services location in the historic Cabbagetown district of downtown Toronto and can be contacted at: ltrudel@tcet.com

NEW PERSPECTIVES: ONE STUDENT REDEFINES WHAT EDUCATION MEANS FOR HIM

BY YVONNE VOULGARIS

There is no static profile for students who come to PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs. Some students know exactly what path they'd like to follow; others have a general idea that they want to improve their skills but are not yet sure to what end. Simone Morrison, Program Manager at PTP East, often says, “We meet students where they are.” This mandate allows for flexibility and offers peace of mind to students, regardless of whether they feel the need to slow things down or speed things up during this leg of their journey.

Steven Trussler is one such student. Like many successful people who learn to use the tools at their disposal, he is enrolled in

both the Literacy and Basic Skills upgrading program, as well as PTP's newly acquired GED Achievement® Program, which is conveniently offered in the same space as the LBS program.

Time away from formal education has given Steven a new perspective about the concept of it, seeing it now “as something that I need to further my goals in life rather than something that I should rebel against.”

It is not uncommon for some adults to arrive on PTP's doorstep with a rebellious attitude towards education based on their subjective experiences, reluctantly accepting it as a necessary step towards something different. Ironically, a frequent commonality amongst students is

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CHASING THE DREAM

BY LOIS KAMENITZ

doctoral student experience it is also about old age, about older women, and about the “double standard” of ageism and sexism. It is about the power of words and the opportunity I have as a storyteller to tell stories which can both help us come to terms with old age and with death and contribute to a shift in the conversation on aging, from one primarily of decline and loss to one of life stories still developing. My doctoral journey however almost ended before it even began.

The question I am often asked is why – why pursue a PhD now at my age. For me the answer is simple. Growing up a troubled child in a multi-generational eastern European immigrant family where silence spoke louder than words and there was always the presence of an absence, I sought solace in my books, my ideas, my intellectual adventures. I became a head with legs. Through the act of writing stories, I become visible to myself. And, through reading the poetry and the stories other people wrote, I learned that I was not alone. Fortunately, those pursuits were my happy place because the outlet of sports was denied to me. That continues today. I was diagnosed, at a young age, with an auto-immune bleeding disorder which meant I could not participate in any physical activity where I might injure myself. It went into remission in my thirties but in my early twenties I was diagnosed with an autoimmune and

especially disabling form of arthritis which destroyed my hands and feet. To build a career, care for a family, nurture friendships, all while living with debilitating pain and significant physical limitations took courage, hard work, and an incredible belief in the possible but with the strong women and gentle men who walked alongside me, I created an amazing life.

Reflecting on my life I knew that to be successful in my PhD journey I could not complete it alone. Nor for that matter did I want to. I always believed that while each one of us can be agents of change; a better world is only possible in community with others. I reached out to other women I met who like me, were “of a certain age” and pursuing a PhD. We started a study group with four women, the group has grown to five and includes women from various academic disciplines. They range in age from their late fifties to early seventies, some are at the beginning of their doctoral program, some midway, some close to the end. We meet monthly over a working lunch and in between we keep in touch by email. We share experiences, problem solve issues of concern, celebrate successes, update each other on conferences, publishing opportunities, important deadlines, and act as critical friends for work in progress. I have wonderful colleagues and friends, a loving and supportive partner and, in just a short time, I will have that PhD in hand.

Adult Continuing Education Programs for the



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Check out the following learning
opportunities – Serving Durham Region

www.con-ed.ca

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Personal Support Worker,

ESL, Linc, Computers for ESL

Correspondence (at home learning)

Adult Upgrading - Literacy and Basic Skills (MTCU Funded)

Night school, Summer school, E-Learning, Computer Courses

Microsoft Office Specialist Training

Oshawa Campus 905 438-0570 & 905-626-6631

Ajax Campus 905-683-7713 & 905-626-6631

Reconnect Program - Ajax Campus 905-666-1146

Whitby Giffard Centre Campus ESL & Linc 905-666-1255

Welcome Centre ESL & Linc 289-481-1336

Adult Upgrading LBS Program 905-438-0570 Ext. 57156

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NEW PERSPECTIVES

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truly just how many varied, sometimes difficult, life paths have led them to attend school and upgrading programs as adults. Adult education carries different connotations for everyone.

And Steven has embraced it. Having previously completed his formal education up to grade 11, his support system includes family and friends who want to see him succeed, lovingly “breathing down [his] neck” to get his GED. These caring and thoughtful nudges have led him to step up his educational game.

He works diligently to finish assignments and continues to strive for academic success. Between classes and assignments, he can be found completely engrossed in a novel, which has undoubtedly contributed to his ability to answer questions involving definitions during vocabulary lessons. He is eager to complete extra work, always looking to be challenged.

He has improved quickly in his time at PTP. His recent practice test for GED indicates that achieving his goal is imminent. He plans to write his final test this summer, hopefully finally fulfilling another wrung on the ladder towards his goals.

Steven’s plan is to enter college and one day own his own business. “I’m hoping to one day own and operate a restaurant or bakery.” Conveniently, PTP also offers special programming two afternoons a week, one of which is classes for Food Handler Certification. This may even lead Steven back to PTP in the future. The other special programming includes Computer Skills for Job Search, Readiness for Learning, and a Pre-Entrance Preparation class, which is an early stepping stone for people who may have a touch farther to go before achieving GED success.

Steven feels that attending LBS and GED Achievement® Program classes simultaneously at PTP have helped him prepare for his final test.

When asked what advice he could offer to prospective students teetering on the idea of whether to continue their education, he puts it simply:

“Advice I would give is to just go and get it done. Don’t make excuses as to why you can’t and just do it.”

Excellent advice, Steven.

We value your opinion. Please let us know what you think about this column. Send comments to learningcurves@hotmail.com.



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HOW I IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABILITY INTO MY DAILY LIFE

BY MICHELA GITTENS

Climate change is not a new concept. Scientists have been speaking of climate change for some time. With every passing year, natural disasters such as category 5 hurricanes in the Caribbean and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes in Indonesia underscore that climate change is happening now, at an alarming rate and with grave consequences.

Human activities such as the combustion of fossil fuels, industrial processes and deforestation, are the leading causes of climate change. We depend heavily on Earth's natural resources for commodities ranging from electricity to clothing, however, it is essential that we reduce our carbon consumption and move to a more carbon neutral society if we intend to address this looming threat. This will require a shift in thinking and behavior to lessen the burden on our natural resources and to help us achieve a sustainable future. Now I am not suggesting you go out and buy an electric vehicle or purchase solar panels, although, if you have the means to, that would be fantastic and a great way to reduce your carbon footprint. In this article, I will detail the simple and affordable ways that I reduce my environmental impact. These are quite easy to adopt and will get you started on a rewarding journey towards sustainable living.

Disposing of Waste according to Municipal Standards

Here in Toronto, waste is sorted into three categories: recycling, compost and garbage. Sure, it is easier to just throw everything in the garbage bin but correctly sorting your waste can benefit the environment and reduce the amount of waste going to the landfill. To make the sorting process easier, I consult the Waste Wizard on the City of Toronto website to assist me in identifying what waste items go where.

LED Lights

LED lights are extremely energy efficient, utilizing up to 90% less energy than incandescent bulbs. Utilizing LEDs are a great way to reduce your energy consumption and your electricity bill!

Reduce Plastic Consumption

Single-use plastics such as plastic bags, water bottles and straws have dire environmental consequences. According to the UN, only 9% of all plastic waste ever produced has been recycled, 12% has been incinerated and the remaining 79% has accumulated in landfills, dumps and the natural environment such as the ocean. Consider using refillable water bottles instead of purchasing bottled water, carrying reusable bags when shopping and switching to stainless steel straws or paper straws in place of the traditional plastic ones.

Public Transit

According to Environment and Climate Change Canada, in 2017, the transportation sector was accountable for 24% of the total greenhouse gas emissions in Canada making it the second largest source of emissions. Utilizing public transit is a great way to reduce these emissions without incurring high cost. I take advantage of the TTC 12-Month Pass, a monthly cost of \$138.55. It is a very cost effective and environmentally conscious way to get around the city.

Minimalistic and Circular Thinking

Have you ever looked around your home and realized how many items you do not use or even need? When I was preparing to relocate to Toronto and was taking stock of what I would bring with me, only then did I realize how many items I bought over the years and used once or never at all. In a society where it is effortless to be a consumer, it is very easy to get caught up on trends and fads. Since then, I have adopted a minimalistic and circular way of thinking. I often ask myself whether I need an item. Instead of the usual 'take-make-waste' mentality, I have implemented a circular approach to breathe life into products that would have otherwise been discarded.

Paperless Billing and E-statements

The paper industry is a major contributor to deforestation. In this digital era, opting for paperless billing and e-statements are great ways to reduce paper consumption. Paper is a recyclable commodity but not everyone recycles it. It is always better to prevent the generation of waste instead of creating it and then having to find environmentally friendly way to dispose of it.

This list of green initiatives is by no means exhaustive. There are countless ways to reduce your carbon footprint on the environment. These are just some easy habits and behavioral changes that I have adopted to start building a precedent where the environment is considered in all things that I do.

References

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ADULT & CONTINUING EDUCATION - ADULT DUAL CREDIT PROGRAM

BY DENNISHA POWELL – STUDENT, BRIAN J. FLEMING ADULT LEARNING CENTRE, DPCDSB

Beginning this journey back to school has been a long one, and has not been easy. I dropped out of school in my teen years. When I decided to go back to finish my education, Dufferin Peel Catholic School board's Co-Op class gave me the opportunity to earn my remaining high school credits. While I was attending there, an opportunity came up for me to attend an Adult Dual Credit (ADC) Program at Sheridan College.

The Program helps students like me, who are finishing their high school diploma and looking to start to venture into college courses. This program helps students transition into college, awarding students both high school and college credits. It's the perfect way to get your foot in the door and get an idea of what being in college is all about.

I have been attending classes at Sheridan College (Hazel McCallion Campus), once a week for approximately 2 hours. The ADC course is Wellness and Healthy Living. The majority of the course material is online, which gives me the luxury of having all my notes in one place: my laptop. Teachers not only discuss the material, but also make sure all students are caught up with the course material. No student was left behind or excluded in any way, which helped all the students thrive and succeed.

I recommend this course. I came into this course not knowing what to expect. I surely have not been disappointed. All of my

teachers at Brian J. Fleming ALC and Sheridan have done everything they can to try to get me through my first college experience. They also have lovely people at Sheridan speaking to students about how they can expand their knowledge, and how they can use all their resources to help you do your best, always.



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The majority of the Summer Intensive Bootcamps will be offered at the Hazel McCallion Campus in Mississauga, and won’t require any prerequisites as they are entry-level offerings. “These engaging courses will really benefit people looking to upgrade their skills who have the support of their employers in terms of taking time off to complete professional development training,” says Velez-Pulgarin. “Also, if the Bootcamp course someone takes is a credit course in a Continuing and

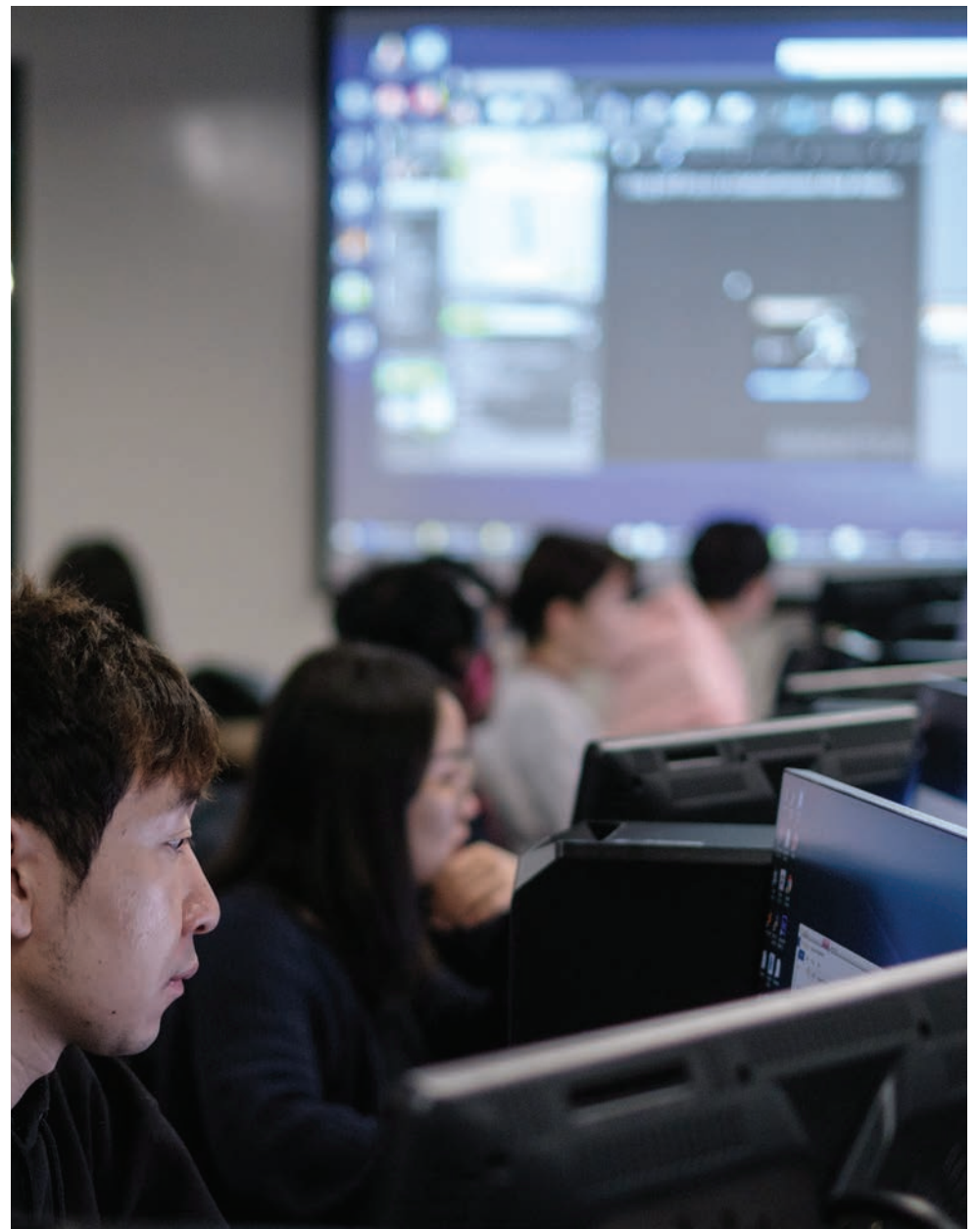
Professional Studies program, they’ll be able to use that credit towards program completion.”

And despite the compressed format, Velez-Pulgarin says students will benefit from hands-on training and interactive and collaborative exercises. “A big part of coming to class is getting theory and then digging into the practical application, so that will be key in the Bootcamps too,” she says.

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TURNING MY LIFE AROUND

Mina Wong in conversation with Tim Ross

I often chatted with Tim when he worked at a store near Toronto's Main and Gerrard Streets.

One day he was gone. His boss simply told those who knew him, "Tim's moved out west."

But where did he go? Did he get a new job? How could we get in touch with him?

No one knew.

Last month, I unexpectedly ran into Tim near Toronto's City Hall.

Tim introduced two companions as his wife, Connie, and her brother, Andy who were visiting from British Columbia.

Tim also said, "I have really changed."

"If you have time for coffee..." I ventured, wanting to know about his life.

When we met the next day, Tim blurted out, "Listen, you won't believe it, but I finished high school, and I work at a school in Campbell River."

What he said was so inspiring that I interviewed him for a story about him.

MW: How did you decide to leave Toronto for Campbell River?

TR: You won't believe it, but I hit rock bottom six years ago. I had started AA so many times I lost count. I came close to killing myself. I was a total disaster.

But I remembered a magazine story about rehab in West Kelowna. I had to try it.

At first I was a mess. They also told me the place was full, but if I seriously wanted rehab, they would take me to their Campbell River branch. They said I could work hard and take it from there.

The place turned out to be a school run by retired teachers with really big hearts.

For weeks, I just cried my eyes out, threw up, and had headaches so bad I just wanted to die. A teacher called Nate took care of me. He made me eat proper food, chop wood, study Math, and turn in at lights out. He taught me to make myself useful in simple ways.

MW: That's fascinating! How did you do at the school?

TR: Instead of booze, I learned to focus on school and what I could do with an education. The teachers figured I had one year left before finishing high school. It took me actually two years.

All this time, I chopped wood and cleaned the school. I learned to grow food, fish, cook, build sheds, and thought about what my life was all about. I really wanted to turn myself around.

More and more, I hated the life that reached for booze first thing in the morning, and more and more, I wanted a normal life, a job, and maybe meet a nice girl who could understand what I had gone through. Things were certainly improving!

MW: What happened when you finally finished high school?

TR: It was actually four years ago at Christmas. All our teachers and students from Campbell River and West Kelowna got together, and some of us were getting our Grade 12 diplomas. There was this cute girl with the kindest eyes who kept looking at me.

That was Connie and she had worked at the West Kelowna branch for a year. Her folks lived near Elk Valley. During rehab, it took her a long time to make things right with them, but they were okay with her now, as long as she was straightening out her own life.

I would have been stupid not to be Connie's friend. We started talking about our lives, the future with jobs, a home, and maybe children. We got married two years ago, and we are teaching assistants at our Campbell River school.

MW: What an amazing story. What was the turning point in this whole experience?

TR: I think I was sober enough to want something normal. Getting away from drinking buddies in Toronto was the first step.

I got nowhere with AA as long as I didn't take responsibility for drinking. After quitting school, I stayed so mad at my parents and their problems I blamed them for everything. But Nate and other teachers helped me take responsibility for my own behavior as part of starting a new life. You really have changed.

MW: What's next in your future?

TR: Rehab saved my life. I think honesty, sobriety, a job, marriage — that's everything to me now.

Connie and the school have meant everything to me. They gave me an education, a job, a second chance. With people to support us, we will work hard and help others with the same struggles. We've been there. We can help them now.

We value your opinion. Please let us know what you think about this column. Send comments to learningcurves@hotmail.com.



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ZHI HAI'S STORY

BY WENDY TERRY

Zhihai is an ESL student in the first level ESL class at Overland Learning Centre. It is remarkable that he is 91 years old and has been learning English for over two years now.

He came to Canada in June 2017 and started English classes in November 2017. His daughters are living in Canada and his wife had passed away, so he moved here. He told me through Duoli, our translator, see her story below, "If you come to Canada, you must learn English."

Some seniors coming to a new country would just retreat to their daughters' lives, relying on them to translate for them. Not Zhihai.

Maybe it is because he was a university professor in Beijing, that he sees learning as a natural challenge. When I mentioned to him that if you teach, you know how to learn. He gave me a Chinese saying. "Give the order, study the order." We know that to really learn something, you must be able to teach it. This is common knowledge in all cultures.

The picture shows Zhihai showing what he knows about what Rosemary, his teacher, had just taught him. He has great praise for Rosemary.

He noted that he learns about many other cultures in his class as most of the students come from different countries.

So he learns from his classmates and he no doubt tells them about China.

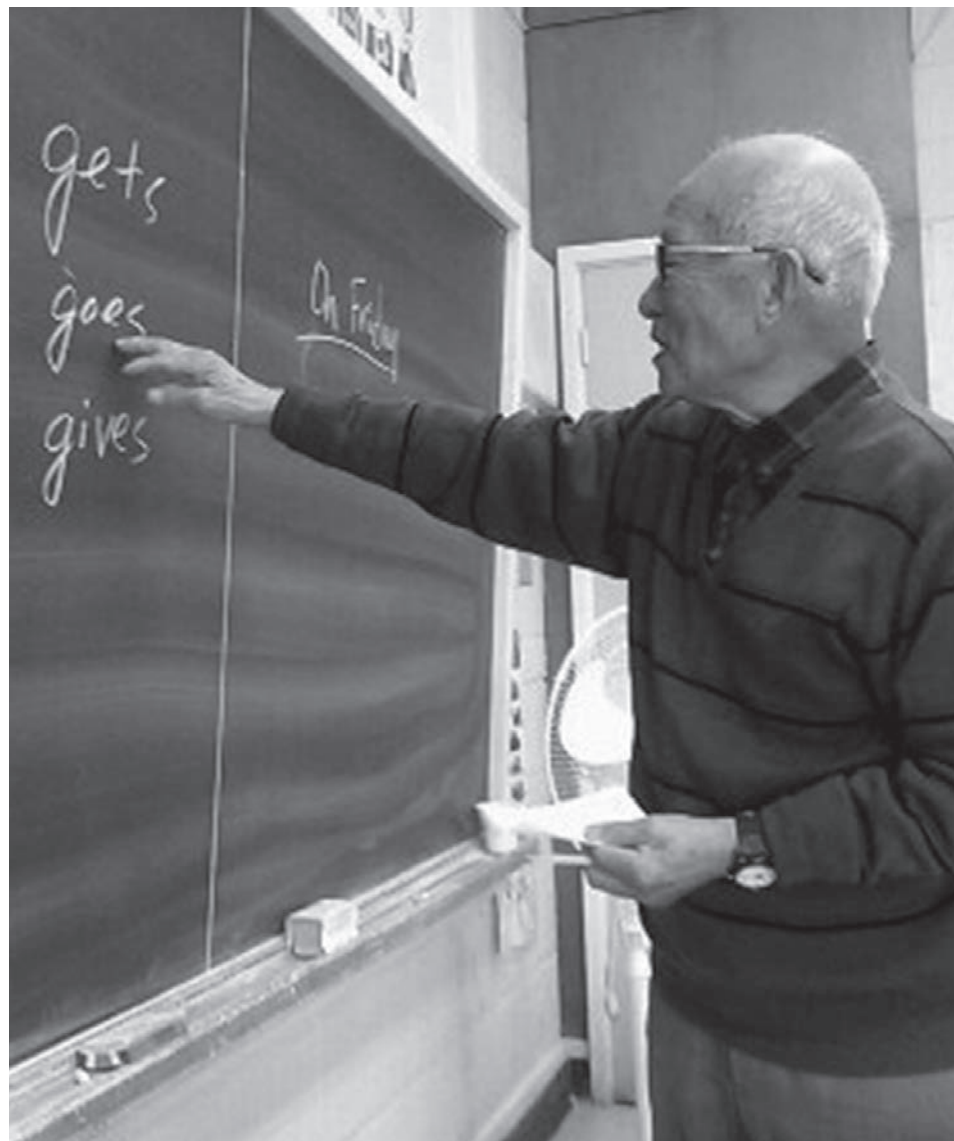
Zhihai's speciality is Biology and Genetics. For 20 years he studied and researched about "rice and humans." Then he taught at university for 10 years.

He not only stays fit mentally by learning English but by staying physically active. Rosemary found him for me, doing Tai Chi with his fellows students in the parking lot. He walks to Overland using his walker every day. He lives in the neighbourhood. He never misses a class. Everyone told come rain or shine, snow or ice he is there.

I noticed that he seemed to understand much of what I said, although Duoli was translating his answers. He told me he listens to English videos at home. Ah that explains his advanced level skills in listening.

Duoli got her Level 7, 8 ESL Certificate in 2016. She translates for others in her residence. She is 82 now and came to Canada when she was 62. I told Zhihai, he will have to live to be 100 in order to earn his Level 7 8 ESL Certificate like Duoli did. He laughed, no translation needed.

We value your opinion. Please let us know what you think about this column. Send comments to learningcurves@hotmail.com.



Kathleen Wynne
Member of Provincial Parliament
Don Valley West



**Happy
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SUMMER IS NOT A DOWN TIME FOR LEARNING

The spring term for colleges and university open access (continuing education and part time evening) have start dates that run into June, July and August.

The schools(adult day schools) run on four quads (fall, winter, spring, summer)

English language programs have continuous intake.

Community based programs for the most part have continuous intake year round.

Career Colleges have continuous intake. year round.

Phone and ask what's on, don't miss out.

LEARNING CURVES
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DUOLI'S STORY

Can you imagine a senior who is 74 years old learning English from Zero?
How could I learn English at my age? This is a true story about me.

Duoli wrote this for our May/June 2011 Issue of Learning Curves

After I finished my university courses, I got a master's degree in China when I was 24. I didn't learn English in China as a second language. (I learned Russian instead). When I came to Canada, I couldn't read a word in English. I felt like a blind person. I couldn't understand what people said. I felt like a deaf person. Also, I didn't know how to describe things or express my opinions to others. I felt like a mute. I always just nodded and smiled.

I had to depend on my daughter for everything, for example, grocery shopping, making an appointment, describing my symptoms to the doctor or expressing at problem I had. It was difficult to answer the telephone too. I was really in hot water. How could I live in Canada and enjoy my life? I realized that I had to learn English as much as I could.

First, I took English courses step by step. From October 1999 to August 2001, I studied in the LINC program at Centennial College from Level 1 to Level 5. Every day, I got up early. After I sent my granddaughter to school, I caught the bus to my class so as to be punctual. In class I listened to the teacher attentively and took detailed notes. I did lots of exercises and tried to memorize new words as well. After class, I picked up my granddaughter from school and went home. Then I cleaned the rooms in my home and cooked dinner. At night, after doing some chores, I always reviewed my lessons completely, and finished

my homework on my own until midnight.

In addition, I usually borrowed some English books from the library and read them on the weekend. I was always in a hurry and as busy as a bee. I was crazy about learning English, I hardly went out or visited friends. I spent all my spare time studying. Therefore, I passed every test at each level without difficulty, and finished all the LINC classes. Consequently, I got three special certificates for an excellent record of attendance and punctuality (Only one student could get this award in each class).

Second, I registered in the ESL program at Overland, where I have been studying since December 2007. I returned to level 3 – 4, 4 – 5, and 5 – 6, and now this is my first time in level 7 – 8.

I am the oldest student in all my English classes. Indeed, as a senior, learning is more difficult than for younger people. Not only is it hard to remember, it is also easy to forget. So I have to work hard. I have been keeping all the class hand-outs and reviewing them once in a while. I usually use some new words in sentences, and then use them to make some stories to help me to remember. I have also written lots of letters or e-mails in English to my teachers and friends. They also corrected my mistakes. This way has encouraged me to practice more to improve my English. I believe every little effort helps. I am never tired of studying English every day.

I am an industrious student. Besides

reading and writing, I have also taken a conversation class. I had a good group, which was friendly and co-operative. We respected and helped each other. We always practiced lots of dialogues and listened to many tapes.

I have greatly appreciated all of my teachers. They have used a variety of approaches to help students to learn English; for example, pictures to illustrate things with easy body language and other examples to explain clearly and concise explanation on the board. They have always responded to our questions patiently and precisely. Their teaching styles have made a deep impression on me. I also admire that they are knowledgeable and experienced. The classes have been filled with excitement. I have been fortunate learning English with them and have made more progress than ever before.

Nonetheless, I still don't have enough skill in English. For example, I can't speak fluently and coherently. I have problems

with pronouncing some names of things clearly. I can't speak without unnatural hesitation. I am deficient in vocabulary, I can't fully understand the answer machine, and I can't fill out some medical examination forms. My range of grammar is limited. I find a lot of verbs confusing and I make many spelling mistakes. As such, I have not progressed as smoothly as I expected.

Considering all the above, I think English is a skill. It needs time to develop. Making conversation with others is an effective way to improve. I always tell myself: "You are never too old to learn. Industry is the parent of success. You never know what you can do until you try."

Editor's Note: Only a little editing was needed, It is truly amazing that this woman in her seventies was able to learn English from scratch to the point that she could write this article.

CONTINUING DUOLI'S STORY

BY DUOLI WU 2019,5,22

Do you remember Duoli's story? Are you interested in what's going on with me recently. Since September 2011, I have insisted on learning English step-by-step. In 2013, I moved into Level 6-7 and 7-8 ESL classes to study English. As a senior learner, it is more difficult than for younger people. Not only is it hard to remember, it is also easy to forget. I always tell myself "I'm the oldest student in ESL English class, but I don't want to be the worst one."

So I have studied English very seriously and I have been a conscientious student. Every day I come to class regularly and I'm punctual even if the weather is bad. In classes, I listen to the teacher attentively and take detailed notes. After classes, I always review the lessons completely and do lots of exercises—more than what's required from the teacher.

I organize the vocabulary into different groups and use them to make sentences for memorizing new words. Moreover I usually borrow some English Grammar and Vocabulary books from the library and I study them in my spare time. I have done this so that I passed every test at each level of the ESL program. All of my benchmarks are now at Level

"8". This is the highest level of ESL measurement of progress.

On Jan. 28, 2013, my instructor gave me a comment on the ESL Learner Progress Report. She wrote, "You are such a dedicated English learner and are progressing in all areas."

One June 25, 2014, another teacher wrote, "Duoli is the most hardworking and conscientious student I've seen. Duoli always does above and beyond the required, she's a true role model to her classmates."

In fact, I'm crazy about learning English by listening to the news, reading, books and speaking with others, and it has already become part of my life.

First, I have been determined to do more practice continually. In my opinion English is a skill; learning English is always a challenge. It is necessary to keep our eyes on the prize, as it takes time to develop and never has any short-cuts. I think the most important thing is do more and more practice.

I practice by making sentences and stories to help me remember new words, and I have also written lots of letters and e-mails to my teachers and friends; and they have

corrected mistakes. As a result, I really got better at correcting my mistakes. This has encouraged me to practice more, and more practice really helps me to brush up on my vocabulary and improve my English skills.

Next, I made a goal for myself to overcome the problems in my English. As usual, many problems, such as pronunciation are ongoing; spelling has lots of mistakes, many phrasal verbs and idioms are confusing; I can't follow the speaker in the news, and can't fill out some medical examination forms. What can I do to overcome them?

In the beginning, I create a short-term goal to work toward the bigger one. For example, how many new words, phrasal verbs and idioms do I want to learn and how many English articles and books am I prepared to read? These can be integrated into daily and weekly lists, and I regularly make sure they have been done well.

Besides reading and writing, making conversation with others is an effective way to improve my speaking skills. After class, I like to just hang out with friends, and speak to them in English, whenever I can. For

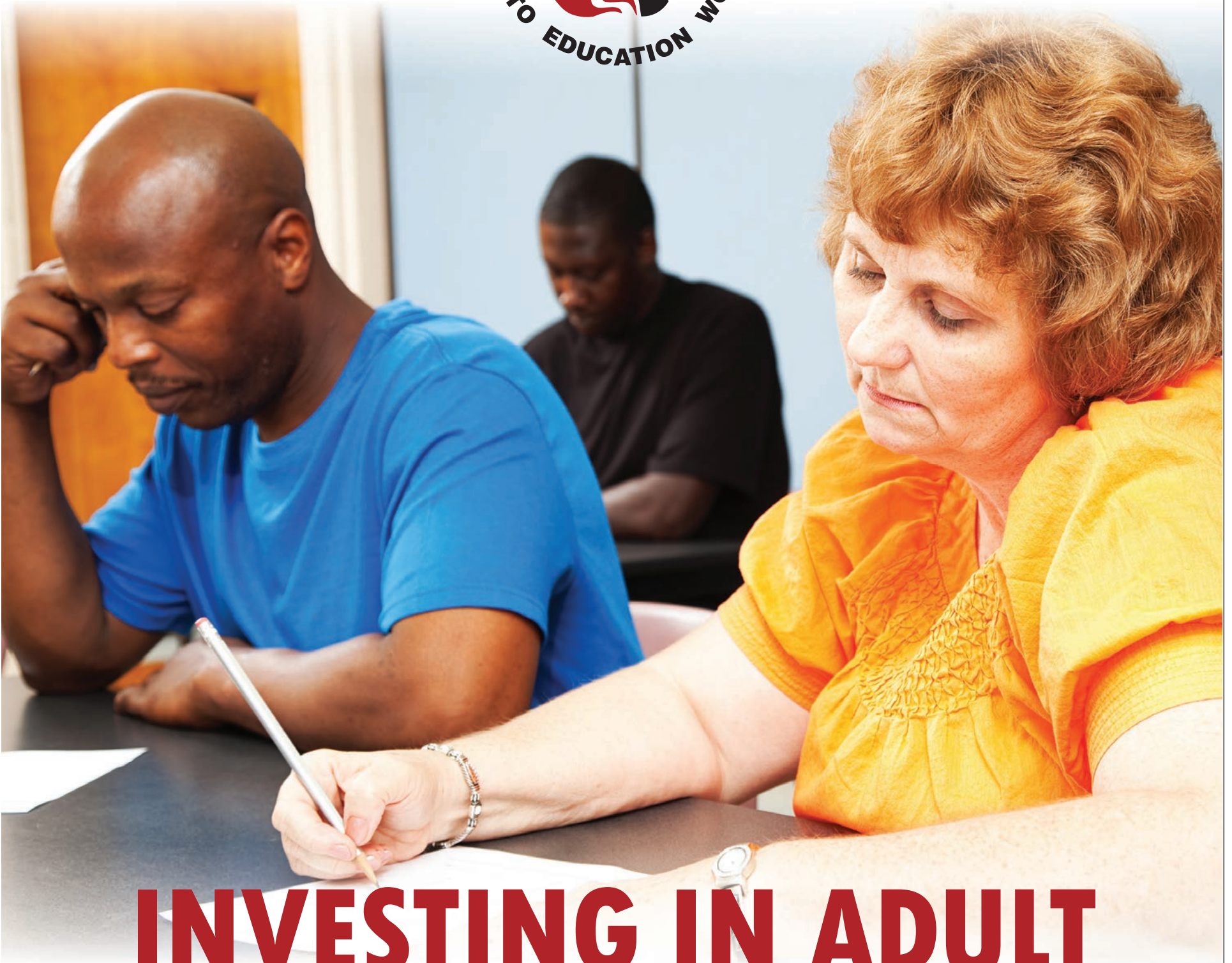
example, making small talk with someone at the bus stop or on the bus beside me. I also use English and practice during vacations. I make conversation with people who are around me, I order from the menu for meals on cruises; and, I understand the guide who introduces information about a resort in English.

In addition, I use English as volunteer translator in my seniors' building to help people who need to understand English. I help with writing meeting notes, reading government letters and with accompanying others when they go to see the doctor. Moreover, I also use English to study the Bible in my church.

The most important point is that, I believe winners are not people who never fail, but people who never quit. I also believe that every little effort helps a lot. Nothing is impossible. You never know what you can do until you try.

We value your opinion. Please let us know what you think about this column. Send comments to learningcurves@hotmail.com.





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Dear Elcee

**Dear Elcee is a feature in every issue of Learning Curves.
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**Elcee – The WEA of Canada
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Dear Elcee:

I am 55 years old, working in a good job but I am going to be made redundant within the next couple of years. I have been offered an opportunity to go back to school for training which will allow me to obtain a better paying and more secure job in my company. The problem is that the idea of going back to school terrifies me. Can an old dog learn new tricks?

Terrified in Toronto

Dear Terrified:

I recently met a woman who learned to drive for the first time at the age of 65! I asked why she decided to learn to drive at that late age. She said she wanted a challenge. The famous folk artist Grandma Moses did her first painting at 76. Frank McCourt, author of *Angela's Ashes*, didn't take up writing until he was 65. Learning is different as you age but not in a bad way. Here are some key points to ponder; Midlife learners bring a level of understanding to learning where they are better able to apply new concepts to previous experience. You have already experienced workplace culture and may have encountered challenges that young learners have not and are therefore better able to incorporate and/or transfer these skills to their new workplace. Midlife learners are often more focussed than younger learners. They are more likely to have a stronger sense of purpose in choosing to return to school and therefore "own" their decision. Studies show that while a younger person may be able to learn new tasks more quickly an older person is able to integrate information more readily. Midlife learners may be more disciplined in their studies. While a young college student may seem, at times, all over the map in their studies (many of us remember "cramming" for exams!) the more mature student may be entering studies already accustomed

to managing a myriad of demands. They usually have developed abilities through work and personal life in setting priorities, especially in establishing time for study. Numerous recent scientific studies on neuroplasticity attest to how remarkable the brain is in being able to utilise various parts of the brain in learning new tasks and concepts. There is also scores of evidence on the positive effects on us on our mental and physical health by continuing to learn as we age. The good news is...you CAN teach a more mature dog new tricks. The methods may vary and the cleanup is way, way easier. (Very little shoe chewing and pillow ripping with mature dogs...). I like to think that while younger learners may have more energy and shorter sleep times, older workers gain in the areas of patience and wisdom. I choose patience and wisdom any day. So, go ahead! Enjoy! Your brain will thank you.

*Dear ELCEE is written by Deborah Noel,
deborahjnoel@gmail.com
Send her your questions.*

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**tdsb
Community
Services**



We offer a variety of programs in the community,
and **we have something for YOU!**

For more information on our programs and services, including LINC, ESU, ELT,
Newcomer Services, Hairstyling Apprenticeship and much more, visit
www.tdsb.on.ca/communityservices or email communitysvcs@tdsb.on.ca



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Settlement Services • Employment Services • Language Training • Skills Development