

# Literacy Programs in Action

By Helen Thompson

**D**o you like to read? How many times daily do you use your reading skills to read your child a story, follow medication instructions, or read a newspaper article? What would your life be like if you couldn't read or had great difficulty reading? Lack of literacy skills have a devastating impact on the lives of the young and old in our communities.

Literacy education is recognized as an important priority by the government. Under the funding umbrella, groups such as the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) and Literacy Link Eastern Ontario (LLEO) advocate for literacy programs. Tutor training workshops, learner workshops and ongoing board development offer a valuable resource to all literacy groups.

I was elected as a board member to the Quinte Literacy Group (QLG) in 1991. Quinte Literacy was organized in September 1987 under the guidance of Leona Henry, Belleville's Chief Librarian, who recognized the need for a literacy program in the community. During my term, the Board faced many challenges drafting a revised constitution and a Policies and Procedures Guide.

There are a number of programs in place within the Quinte Literacy Group. The One-to-One Literacy Program is the mainstay of the QLG. The Co-ordinator of the program facilitates tutor-learner matchery, recruiting, tutor workshops and ongoing board development. Growth in the Family Literacy Program is strong, with many volunteer tutors and pre-school and school-age children matches. "The Born to Read Program" is offered every summer; it is an eight-week program for young expectant mothers and mothers with infants.

"Books and Best Friends" match volun-



The President of the Quinte Literacy Group, Marie Branscombe (right), presented Helen Thompson (left) with a Certificate of Appreciation for her efforts with the literacy programs.

teers with children experiencing reading and writing difficulties. A summer school-age tutoring program operates during the months of July and August to help students and learners at risk. And a pre-school program for Housing Authority families is also working well.

A new literacy program for the Quinte Literacy Group began in February, 1993 - the Women's Learning Project. Twenty-one women participate in five groups that meet around issues - women's, tenant's, human rights, and life skills. Reading, writing and math skills are built into the support services offered.

As you can see literacy programs are available for everyone, whatever their age! I found tutoring in the Workplace Entry Level Learning (WELL) Program very challenging. My learner arrived at class after finishing the night shift at his workplace. It was 8 a.m. and we started our class with coffee. I followed a learner based approach to developing his program and we covered math, writing skills and reading upgrading.

My client was reluctant to read orally, so we used the Dyad or Paired Reading Method to read together. Unfamiliar words

were added to his vocabulary list and he developed workable dictionary skills. We used his workplace manuals, invoice forms and daily journals as practice work. Soon he was able to fill out requisition forms and write job reports. I still remember the day he met me at the front door and said with a big grin: "I just got a raise and it's because I've learned to read and write."

What a great feeling I had - I had made a friend and taught him to improve his literacy skills in writing, math and reading. In return, he taught me to have a healthy respect for learning.

Yes, literacy is everyone's right!

Would you like to get involved with a literacy group? Call the Read Line at 1-800-465-7323, sponsored by Literacy Link Eastern Ontario. They will give you the phone number of your local literacy group. Go ahead, help someone learn to love reading!

*Helen Thompson is a Board Member of the Quinte Literacy Group and Board Director for the Junior Women's Institutes of Ontario.*

## A Good Idea!

All life members in Ontario and Canada who are in possession of a Life Membership Certificate should give the serial number to their Branch Secretary. The Secretary can then record it in the front of her book which will eliminate problems for District Secretaries after the member has deceased.

*Submitted by Florence Gole, Waterloo North*