

# Working for Literacy Guild a learning experience

BY TRACY BARWEGEN  
Special to The Tanner

I collapsed onto the sofa, wiping away the sweat, which threatened to drip into my eyes, with the back of a slightly shaking hand. I felt wilted, discouraged, disheartened.

Last summer, every day for a month-and-a-half, I walked the short but tedious stretch of road from my house to the Canada Unemployment Centre for Students.

And every day, I walked back, feeling that sense of inadequacy become more and more oppressive. I needed the money, definitely, but my lack of employment was quickly becoming much more than merely a financial issue.

There were new jobs posted on the bulletin boards at the Centre quite regularly, and yes, I pursued as many of these prospects as possible. However, nothing seemed to be working out. Either the em-



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ployers did not respond, or they would call me, meet me, smile, shake my hand and then watch me go, communicating a sense

of dismissal with their whole demeanor. Why was this happening to me? It wasn't as if I had no qualifications whatsoever - I felt I was fairly competent in many areas and certainly skilled enough to be a cashier for a fast-food restaurant. I struggled to find some plau-

sible answers and found some explanations for my dilemma.

The economy, although not as bleak as in recent years, was still not as booming as it could be. And, no doubt prospective employers felt reluctant to hire me when they discovered that I would only be able to work for four months, at the end of which time I would continue my schooling at a university in another city.

All right, so my predicament made perfect, logical sense - but it was no less difficult to handle.

Everything changed for me when I secured a job as an administrative assistant for the Read\* Spell\*Write program at the North Halton Literacy Guild.

This program helps people who have difficulty with basic reading and writing, or people who wish to get back in the school system.

There are several adults from

Acton who are being helped by tutors at the Literacy Guild. These students are achieving all kinds of success. I witnessed these people not only build up letter and number skills, but also build up their self-esteem and confidence.

I often reflect on those first weeks of my summer and wonder if I'm wrong to compare myself and the way I felt then, to the people being helped. The fact I didn't find employment right away wasn't because I was incompetent or incapable of working. There just was no opportunity.

In the same way, just because a person has difficulty with reading and writing, it does not mean he or she is incapable of learning how to read and write. It's possible he or she has lacked the opportunity.

I had never viewed the ability to read and write as being an advantage; I guess I took it for granted.

I now realize how ignorant and unaware I was about the misconceptions surrounding illiteracy.

The dedication and commitment I observed from all connected with the Guild impressed me, and even humbled me a bit. Literacy is a cause they all feel strongly about, a cause which *deserves* their dedication and commitment.

Working at the North Halton Literacy Guild was more than a good experience; it was a learning experience. I would encourage anyone in Acton who needs help with reading and writing, or who wants to upgrade his or her skills, to contact the number below.

The North Halton Literacy Guild is a non-profit, charitable organization offering student-centred, private and confidential tutoring to adults. Call the North Halton Literacy Guild for more information at (905)873-2200.

## Legion turns 65 in '96

### LEGION NEWS

BY MIKE MANUEL  
P.R.O. Branch 197

This past weekend's Karaoke Night was a great success and will be followed up on March 16 with another. This function is open to the general public. If you can make it down, please do so.

For Branch 197 members,

March 24 has been set aside to celebrate our Branch's 65th anniversary. As soon as I have more to pass on regarding this date, I will.

The annual Fun Curling Day has been set for March 31. You don't have to be a curler to participate, so register early.

On April 13, the Royal Canadian Dragoons will be holding a mini reunion at our Branch.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: The Acton Seniors Recreation Centre will be holding its annual general meeting on Feb. 28 at 2 pm. Prizes, refreshments, entertainment and the election of a new board of directors comprises part of the meeting. Front row, from left: Bella-Maye Roszell, Edna Rippon and Olga Thompson. Middle row: Anna Arnold, Ruth Payne, Christine Robertson, Donna Rowley and Bonnie Linfors. Back row: Bill Thompson, Frank Thompson, John Buckman and Bill Rowley are among the Acton seniors who will be on hand. (Doug Harrison photo)

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