

On-line literacy at fingertips of Literacy N. Halton Students

Despite limited funding, Literacy North Halton is keeping pace with the needs of adults in the community who need to upgrade their literacy and computer skills. All lessons are provided locally.

Five years ago most Literacy North Halton (LNH) students wanted to learn how to use computers. With donated equipment and the assistance of trained volunteer tutors LNH was able to start providing basic technology training for their students.

Today, computers have become an integral part of basic literacy training. Students not only want to learn how to use a computer, but they also want to navigate the web, use email and access on-line learning. Literacy North Halton is a registered provider of AlphaRoute, an online adult upgrading program.

AlphaRoute is a secure site where students are registered to access activities

suited to their individual needs. There is a chatroom, where they can chat with other students, and all students are assigned their own email address.

Students learn to use a computer and build new technology skills at the same time as they improve their basic reading, writing and math skills. AlphaRoute has hundreds of on line literacy

lessons for all levels of learners working to upgrade their skills.

Learning to use a computer, accessing the internet and writing an email are all necessary skills to be productive in our knowledge based world. Lessons are part-time, day or evening, in a group or one-to-one.

If you would like an opportunity to learn to use new technology while improving your reading, writing, basic math and computer skills, call Literacy North Halton 905-873-2200.

LNH is partnering for the second year with both Halton Hills and Milton libraries to offer the Golden Oak Book Club for adults. This book club provides an opportunity for students to read an entire novel and submit their comments and ideas about the book online. Students can choose from a list of six books, selected to meet the interests of adult learners. The program also offers lesson plans and discussion questions for our volunteer tutors.

For many students, participating in the Golden Oak Book Club, may be the first time they have ever read an entire book!

January 27, 2005 is Family Literacy Day and libraries in Halton organize special activities to raise awareness around literacy and give

families an opportunity to spend time with their children reading stories. Literacy programs can go a long way to breaking the cycle of low literacy in families. Family literacy programming improves a child's social and educational chances and helps a child's parent to improve their literacy skills in the workplace and in the community.

A Plain Language Workshop: What's in it for business?

Anyone who owns a store or runs a busy office in Halton Hills may assume most people can read their signs, advertisements in the local paper, posters or store displays. Unfortunately, what many don't realize is that, according to a recent Canadian study, 22 per cent of the population (or one in five in Halton) is baffled by printed text.

One of Literacy North Halton's most valued services, aside from its adult literacy program, is its Plain Language Workshops. This local non-profit agency has achieved a regional reputation for its expertise in plain language instruction, and international kudos for its published work *Plain Speaking*. This publication is available for \$15 at the office in Georgetown.

For details call 905-873-2200 for more details.

Ontario could save \$ by hiring more RPNs

The Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (RPNAO) has called on the Ontario government to utilize Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) to their full scope of practice to help reduce escalating operating costs within the healthcare sector.

In a submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the RPNAO suggested that allowing RPNs to practise to their full scope will reduce healthcare facilities' operating costs, while maintaining quality care.

"The government cannot keep bailing out hospitals and other healthcare facilities every time they can't balance their budgets," said Joanne Young Evans, Executive Di-

rector of the RPNAO. "By hiring additional RPNs and utilizing them to their full scope of practice, Ontario can make significant steps in addressing the nursing shortage, while simultaneously generating substantial cost savings."

The RPNAO also recommended that every publicly funded healthcare facility be required to hire both RPNs and RNs and ensure that both categories are utilized to their full scope of practice. The government has the ability to do so through accountability agreements under Bill 8.

"Many hospitals and other healthcare facilities are spending unnecessarily by implementing a nurse staffing mix consisting of higher proportions of Registered Nurses

(RNs), while at the same time not utilizing RPNs to their full scope of practice, or relegating them to non-nursing roles," said Mona Black, RPNAO President. "In fact, some hospitals have implemented an all-RN model of healthcare, on the specious grounds that they 'have a reputation to uphold'."

If through attrition and new recruitment, 10% of the positions now held by RNs were filled by RPNs, the system-wide savings would amount to more than \$152 million per year, without any decrease in quality of services or patient care. These savings reflect only what would be achieved in the acute care sector. More could be saved with implementation in other healthcare sectors.



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