

Literacy a reality with patience and creativity

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

For years, Milton's Dawn Greene has dreamed of reading to her nephews.

"It became so difficult when my brother had two boys," said Ms Greene, 32. "They'd say 'Auntie Dawn, read us a story.' But I can't."

Despite having graduated from high school, Ms Greene reads at about a grade 3 level.

"To me, I feel I didn't graduate the way I wanted to," she said angrily. "They just passed me through."

According to an ABC Canada survey, Ms Greene is not alone. Their figures state that one in six Canadians have trouble with literacy, while 14 per cent of parents can't read to their children.

Ms Greene may have made it through the secondary school system, but she couldn't make sense of why she had such difficulty with words and numbers.

In the end, it was her ex-husband who figured it out.

"We were at a movie theatre. I went to read out the title and I got it backwards," she said.

When he suggested that she may have dyslexia, her immediate reaction was denial.

"He said I had read it backwards and I told him I hadn't. So he asked me to read it again," she said. "I told him I didn't want to. He knew then."

Since then, Ms Greene has been officially diagnosed with the learning disorder that causes people to reverse letters and numbers in their heads.

Knowing that her problem is legitimate has not made the learning come any easier.

Problem legitimate

Ms Greene has been slogging through literacy courses since 1985. Today, she's tutored twice a week by the North Halton Literacy Guild (NHLG).

The guild started 12 years ago and now has almost 100 volunteers, doing everything from tutoring to public relations. It serves Milton, Acton and

Georgetown.

As Ms Greene struggles through a romance novel in class, her goals are simple ones. She wants to be read to her own children, should she have them. She'd like to be able to drive a car.

She can't do that now because she can't read street and traffic signs.

For 21-year-old Kim Jerrett, school had always been a drag. She dropped out at age 16, having barely reached grade 9. She'd been in special education as long as she could recall.

"I just lost interest," she said. "I was kind of in the wrong crowd, as well."

Reading functional

After leaving school, Ms Jerrett got by working as a housekeeper. Her reading is functional — she has no trouble with street signs or grocery lists.

Still, she finds it difficult to string words together on paper. She has trouble understanding complex sentences in newspaper stories.

"I wanted to improve my skills," said Ms Jerrett. "I've improved a lot since I've been here. I can spell better and I'm more comfortable reading."

Ms Jerrett is in a weekly three-hour tutoring class at E.C. Drury. Ironically, that was her old high school.

Tutoring both Ms Greene and Ms Jerrett is Gabriela Truax.

Before landing a full-time job in another field, Ms Truax used to work for professional tutoring companies, with math as her specialty.

Now, she keeps her skills sharp by working with a small group of students every week on a voluntary basis for the NHLG.

"It's very challenging and rewarding," said Ms Truax. "You get to meet a lot of people you wouldn't normally have a chance to meet in the community."

Ms Truax teaches through a mixture of patience, repetition and creativity.

• see THERE'S on page 10



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Tutor Gabriela Truax of the North Halton Literacy Guild helps students discover the joy of reading during a literacy class at the E.C. Drury Adult Education Centre.

Food store held up again

Thursday evening marked the second time in just over a year that downtown frozen food outlet M & M Meats was visited by armed robbers.

The latest incident involved two young males in their late teens or early twenties — one of whom produced a handgun. The pair entered the store at about 7 p.m. and demanded cash.

After obtaining an undisclosed amount of money, the suspects fled on foot in an unknown direction, said Det. Sgt. Jackie Gordon of Halton Regional Police.

No vehicle was believed to have been involved in their getaway.

Halton officers along with the police services dog searched the area but the culprits were not located. No one was injured during the incident and no shots were fired.

The first suspect is described as a white male with a dark complexion and five-foot-10 with a thin build. He was wearing a brown leather jacket.

The second suspect — a white male — was roughly five-foot-four with a medium build. He was wearing a red and blue polar fleece jacket and blue tear-away pants.

Anyone with information is asked to contact investigators at 878-5511, ext. 2415, or Crime Stoppers at 825-8477.



Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) of Halton

Applications are invited from residents of Halton to fill vacancies on the Board of Directors.

The CCAC provides access to a range of long-term care services including nursing, homemaking, and long-term care facilities. It also provides information about other related community services. It is dedicated to providing ease of access to high quality consumer focused community, personal support and health care services. The Board is responsible for the overall management of a budget in excess of \$25 million.

Appointments to the Board are made for a term of three years. Board members are expected to volunteer about 10 hours per month. It is a Board of governance, not of management. The CEO is responsible for implementation within Board prescribed limitations.

Applications are invited from persons who are, or have been, users of the service, family caregivers or those with an interest in ensuring further development of health and social services. Board members should be comfortable with and have empathy for dealing with individuals and community groups.

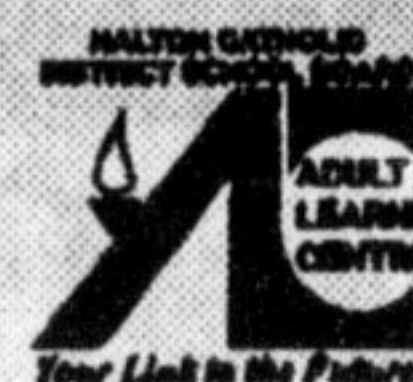
To avoid conflict of interest, people directly associated with agencies or organizations that have or hope to have service or supply contracts with the CCAC, and people who operate long-term care facilities, are **not** eligible to be board members of the CCAC.

The deadline for applications is April 30, 1999.

Letters of application, including a resumé and a statement of why you are interested in becoming a Board Member should be sent to:

Mr. Terry Ruf
Chair, Nominations Committee
Community Care Access Centre of Halton
440 Elizabeth St., 4th Floor
Burlington, Ontario L7R 2M1

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Location: Adult Learning Centre
2350 Trafalgar Road
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Start/End Dates: April 12 - June 4, 1999 (eight weeks)

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Interviews will be conducted on April 6 & 7 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Description:

- Daytime classes - 9:00 a.m. - 4 p.m.;
- Training for junior or intermediate level of employment in the business environment;
- Topics include: How to use the Windows operating system, basic principles of word processing, spreadsheets, databases and slide presentations;
- Software applications include: Windows 98, MS Word 97, MS Excel 97, Powerpoint 97 and Access 97.

Eligibility:

- Unemployed and receiving Employment Insurance benefits, or have received benefits in the past three years (five years in the case of maternity or parental leave).
- Canadian citizen or permanent resident.

Prerequisites:

- Grade 10 Literacy/Numeracy.
- A completed Return to Work Action Plan.
- Keyboarding knowledge essential.
- Proficient in written and oral English, AND/OR one of the following:
 - Familiar with the Windows Environment.
 - Previous office/clerical experience.
 - Be able to demonstrate aptitude and strong interest for an entry level position in a business office environment.

TO SET UP AN INTERVIEW, OR FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,
PLEASE CALL (905) 632-5858