



# Our Voice

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**Community Literacy of Ontario**

80 Bradford Street  
Suite 508

Barrie, Ontario  
L4N 6S7

Tel: 705-733-2312  
Fax: 705-733-6197

[www.nald.ca/volman.htm](http://www.nald.ca/volman.htm)

[clo@bellnet.ca](mailto:clo@bellnet.ca)



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## Lost Contacts and Learner Satisfaction Survey

In preparation for the January 2004 liaison meeting between the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Ontario Literacy Coalition, OLC asked all regional and sectoral networks to circulate a brief survey to agencies in December 2003. The survey gathered information on lost contacts and the learner satisfaction survey. OLC will be compiling a complete summary of results gathered from various regions and sectors. This issue of OURVOICE summarizes some of the strategies Community Literacy of Ontario collected from community literacy agencies.

### Agency Strategies for Reducing Lost Contacts:

- ⇒ Enhance the learner orientation process to include an overview of the importance of follow-up
- ⇒ Update learner contact information more frequently and reiterate why it is important for the agency to have current information on file
- ⇒ At intake obtain more than one contact number and ask for contact numbers from family or friends
- ⇒ Create programming to support learners—for example, offer child care
- ⇒ Let learners know up-front about follow-up procedures and clearly explain to them why their participation in follow-up is so important
- ⇒ Follow up on short-term absences quickly—this may prevent the learner from becoming a lost contact
- ⇒ Offer referral information on other services suited to learners' current needs when they exit—this may encourage them to keep in contact
- ⇒ Work closely with learners and try to see what is happening in their lives that might affect their learning or their desire / ability to stick to it
- ⇒ Have learners sign a learner contract which asks for additional contact numbers and spells out their commitment to the program, including follow-up procedures
- ⇒ Ensure that the program is non-judgmental and nurturing so that learners will be more comfortable with follow-up procedures
- ⇒ Allocate a set time each month for follow-up phone calls
- ⇒ Invite past learners to agency special events
- ⇒ Highlight to learners the importance of letting the agency know that they are planning to leave
- ⇒ Try to get an email address for the learner—while many learners do not have computers, some may have a Yahoo address
- ⇒ Foster a sense that the agency cares about what happens to the learners after they leave the program
- ⇒ Mail a stamped, self-addressed envelope to bring replies
- ⇒ Mail a "we miss you" note from staff, volunteers and learners
- ⇒ Knock down tutor / instructor / student barriers—if the student feels that the agency really cares, they may be more likely to keep in touch

## Agency Strategies for Increasing the Response to the Learner Satisfaction Survey:



- ⇒ Enhance the learner orientation process to include an overview of the importance of the survey
- ⇒ Compile survey results to date and share them with current learners so they can see the results and know that their feedback is taken seriously
- ⇒ Clearly explain to learners at intake the importance of the survey to the program, to the ministry and potentially to future learners
- ⇒ Foster an environment where learners know that their feedback on the program is welcomed
- ⇒ Have the learner sign a contract which includes information stating that they will need to fill out a survey upon exit
- ⇒ Put copies of the survey in a holder mounted to the wall with a sign that says "If you are thinking of quitting, please fill this out"
- ⇒ Have blank surveys available in the common areas of the agency
- ⇒ Have a locked survey box for learners to submit their surveys anonymously
- ⇒ Hold learner information sessions to explain the importance of the surveys and to talk about the survey results

## Supports Suggested by Agencies:

- ⇒ More funding from MTCU for staff support to fulfill these functions
- ⇒ Gain recognition from MTCU that the LBS program serves a special client group—some of whom may drop out with no notice and who are often more difficult to contact (due to lack of telephones, email, stable address, and other factors)
- ⇒ Share information between literacy agencies on effective strategies
- ⇒ Train agencies on best practices in these areas
- ⇒ Allow learners to complete the learner satisfaction survey while still in the program
- ⇒ Make the learner satisfaction survey simpler and make the grid easier for learners to understand



## Helpful Resources

### PRIVACY ACT

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food has produced a fact sheet on the new Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act. This user user-friendly and extremely helpful fact sheet can be accessed at [www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/rural/facts/elecdoc.htm](http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/rural/facts/elecdoc.htm).

### VOLUNTEER AWARDS

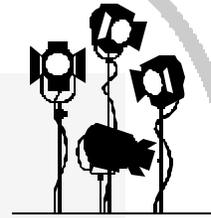
The Honours and Awards Secretariat of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration is now accepting submissions to recognize those who do good work within Ontario communities. You can visit <http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/english/citdiv/honours/index.html> to get a full listing of the awards opportunities, which have an application deadline of March 26, 2004.

### NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

National Volunteer Week is a special time set aside in April to honour the people who donate their time and energy to their fellow citizens. This year, National Volunteer Week will be held from April 18 to 24, 2004. For more information, please visit Volunteer Canada's website at [www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca).

## In the Spotlight—Timmins Learning Centre's Homework Club

By Sheila Marshall



Early in October, I received one of those good news phone calls, which make you whoop with delight. After months of meetings, research, planning and writing I was informed by the Ontario Trillium Foundation that we would be receiving three years of funding for a homework club for French and English children from grades one through eight. Hosting a homework club had been a dream of mine for years. Delivering adult literacy is so important and immensely rewarding but I believe equally important are programs which provide tutoring to children and assistance to parents so that children can be successful in school. Too often I meet adults in my program that maybe would have been successful in school if they had received extra help when they were young.

This project came about as a result of the City of Timmins Strategic Planning *Building our Future* initiative. Educators from all school boards, colleges and community based programs came together to look at ways we could enhance existing services and/or provide new programs to benefit the community. This committee became known as the Community Education Initiative. We were fortunate enough to secure funding for a youth intern through HRDC who researched and put together a Trillium proposal.

January 12, 2004 was our first day of providing tutoring to children. As of the end of January we have 35 children receiving help from 15 volunteer tutors including four staff of the Timmins Learning Centre (TLC). 10 more children are waiting to start in the next week. If you were to visit the TLC between the hours of 4:00 and 6:00 p.m. from Monday to Thursday, you would observe children and tutors working on math, reading, and writing in both French and English. At the moment, the children coming to the program require remedial help in these areas. They are struggling in school and/or have been identified as requiring an Individual Education Plan.

Our biggest challenge is and probably will continue to be, the recruitment of enough volunteers to meet the demand. We also want to move beyond tutoring children to providing parents with the skills and confidence to more effectively help their children by sharing resources, strategies and workshops. We are also looking at ways to build up the homework only side of the program, where children could drop in for help on an occasional basis. Space, tutors and time are all challenges. The one thing that is clear after a few weeks is that there is a huge demand for programs such as this. My only concern is that one Homework Club Coordinator cannot do it all.

*The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, receives annually \$100 million of government funding generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative. The Foundation allocates grants to eligible charitable and not-for-profit organizations in the arts and culture, environment, human and social services, and sports and recreation sectors.*



***CLO's 10th Anniversary Conference will be held on October 20-22, 2004 at Fern Resort in Orillia ([www.fernresort.com](http://www.fernresort.com))***

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## CLO News!

- ⇒ The board and staff of Community Literacy of Ontario are pleased to announce that 2004 is CLO's 10th anniversary. Yes, ten short years ago a volunteer steering committee began planning for the creation of a network of community based literacy programs. In July 1994 staff was hired and our first office was set up in Sudbury, Ontario. Please join the board and staff of CLO in celebrating our 10th anniversary! The highlight of the year will be our conference which will be held in October 2004.
- ⇒ This July, Community Literacy of Ontario was pleased to host Maria Hasselstrom, a journalist from national Swedish radio. Maria interviewed representatives from the Barrie Literacy Council and CLO about literacy. The radio show aired in Sweden in December 2003.
- ⇒ Community Literacy of Ontario's online discussion group is the busiest on the AlphaCom system! All staff from community literacy agencies are welcome to join this dynamic discussion group (called Community Based Literacy). Recent topics discussed include: policies and procedures, learners and computers, student attendance, self management, homework clubs, HR, funding, volunteers and many other topics.
- ⇒ In December 2003 and January 2004, CLO staff have attended the following events: the Ontario Volunteerism Forum; the Network Forum; the MTCU/Ontario Literacy Coalition liaison meeting; the OLC Advisory Round Table; and the Ontario Network meeting of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative.
- ⇒ CLO has recently compiled a survey on the use of technology in community literacy agencies—please see our *Technology Bulletin* to view the interesting results.
- ⇒ If you are looking for a model partnership agreement, please contact CLO and request a copy of our newly-developed partnership policy.
- ⇒ Modules 1 and 2 of CLO's online training in Foundational Family Literacy were delivered in January and February 2004 to rave reviews from participants.
- ⇒ Watch your mailbox—CLO's summary of workshops delivered at our 2003 conference will be coming out in March 2004.

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