



80 Bradford Street, Suite 508, Barrie, Ontario L4N 6S7

EMAIL info@communityliteracyofontario.ca

TEL 705-733-2312 | **WEBSITE** www.communityliteracyofontario.ca

TWITTER @Love4Literacy | **FACEBOOK** www.facebook.com/CommunityLiteracyOntario

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It's CLO Annual General Meeting today. While I am **very** proud of all that the CLO Board and staff have accomplished during this difficult year of COVID19, my heart turns towards our members, Ontario's community-based adult literacy programs.

Our province, country and world have been turned upside down because of the pandemic, but one thing remained constant: the unwavering commitment of literacy educators to the adult learners we serve.

While other doors closed during the pandemic, adult literacy centres remained open, virtually, as best they could. Despite shoestring budgets and your own fears, literacy educators connected by phone, text, and Facebook messenger to help learners cope with the pandemic and access needed services. You mailed books, cards of encouragement, grocery gift cards and more, so that vulnerable people wouldn't feel so alone. You translated complicated government jargon about the pandemic into plain language for learners with low reading levels, and you gathered resources to support them. You kept up connections, linked people with social services and pandemic information, strove to reduce social isolation, and were a friendly voice in a frightening world.

You also pivoted on a dime (literally!). With no extra money, training or support, literacy educators set up an impressive array of virtual learning opportunities for adult learners to keep them engaged in learning and connected with programs/communities. You learned on the fly how to teach on Zoom, Google classroom and more. You never gave up on supporting adult learners.

You are the helpers in Mister Roger's famous quote:

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'

Let's always remember with pride, when the world went quiet and a pandemic was upon us – Ontario's literacy educators held the line never gave up on supporting adult learners.

#LiteracyHeldTheLine

With immense fondness, respect and gratitude,

Joanne

Joanne Kaattari
Co-Executive Director
Community Literacy of Ontario