

Adult Literacy Committee Report



The Rotary Club of Calgary

Working Together With



Report Dated April 15, 2015



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Rotary Club of Calgary Supports Adult Literacy

In the 2014-2015 fiscal year, The Rotary Club of Calgary provided \$15,500 to support Adult Literacy through Bow Valley College.

This included \$9,000 for eighteen Rotary Adult Literacy Bursaries. These Awards in the amount of \$500 each were made to 6 students in each trimester. Dean Gjertsen, Chair of the Adult Literacy Committee and Committee Member Walter Chayka presented the Awards at the Awards Ceremonies held at Bow Valley College.

An additional \$6,500 was provided to support the Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) and Speech Assisted Reading and Writing (SARAW) Programs at Bow Valley. These Programs provide foundational learning at Grade 2 – 4 level for the ABLE Program and Grade 1 – 6 level for the SARAW Program.

The Rotary Club of Calgary has supported adult literacy initiatives with Bow Valley College for 15 years. Since 1999, over 200 adult learners have been helped through Rotary Adult Literacy Bursaries and since 2008 over 210 adults (many with physical and developmental disabilities) have been helped through the ABLE and SARAW Programs.

This year the Club is being awarded a Life of Learning Award at the annual LOLA Awards Ceremony on April 22, 2015. This Award recognizes the Club's outstanding contribution to adult literacy in the Calgary community over many years.

Foundational Learning – ABLE/SARAW - \$6,500

There are few adult literacy programs in Calgary that serve adults reading below grade 4 level and often these programs do not or cannot serve adults with disabilities. To meet this need, Bow Valley College created the ABLE Program. It has operated since 2008 and offers small class sizes and is free of charge to students who face financial barriers. The program is a collaboration of the SARAW and Intermediate Literacy Tutoring programs.

ABLE Read & Write is a part-time, no cost (to the learner), and inclusive literacy program for adults. Adults with disabilities work together with their non-disabled peers. The classroom has a paid facilitator, plus volunteer tutors and support workers as required, and includes group work plus individual work. Volunteer classroom tutors donated a total of 160 hours of time in 2014.



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The total cost of the ABLE Program is \$18,765 with The Rotary Club of Calgary and other community partners providing the required funding. In 2014, twenty-four students in total registered. 43% of the learners had a physical or a mental health issue. Attendance for the September – December semester averaged 78.5%. Providing bus tickets on an emergency basis has made a difference in improving attendance.

The SARAW program uses the award-winning SARAW talking computer program to provide reading, writing and math skills upgrading for adults who read at or below grade 7 levels. It combines a one-on-one student/tutor programming model with computer-based learning, and received honorable mention from the Conference Board of Canada for the Community Learning Award. In the Spring 2015 semester, there were 37 students registered, and in the Fall 2015 semester there are 35-37 registered. The yearly budget for SARAW is \$89,468 with \$58,573 provided by community partners with in kind donations and the balance of funding of \$30,895 being provided by a number of community partners including the Rotary Club of Calgary.

Rotary Adult Literacy Bursaries - \$9,000

The Rotary Club of Calgary awarded 18 Rotary Adult Literacy Bursaries at ceremonies in the fall of last year and the spring of this year. These bursaries are awarded based on nominations by instructors and a review by the Adult Literacy Committee for each nominated student. Bursaries are available to Calgary campus students who are registered in a Basic Education literacy program (Grades 1-9). They are based on financial need and are awarded to students who exhibit a real commitment to continue their education.

In thank you letters, students have told us:

- "It has been seventeen years since I was in school. After being pregnant at 16, I gave up on my education. I kept telling myself that I wasn't smart enough. I want to thank you for blessing me with this award."

- "Thank you for your generous Rotary Club Bursary. I am a student in the Academic Preparation Certificate (program). After I get my High School Diploma, I want to take a Pharmacy Technician Program. I promise you I will work very hard to continue my academic work and achieve my dreams."

The Rotary Club is making a difference in adult literacy. We deeply value the successful relationship we have with Bow Valley College. We have worked together with Bow Valley College on behalf of adults with disabilities and low literacy skills. We appreciate our partnership with them in promoting our ongoing support of adult literacy learners.



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Our Commitment to Adult Literacy

Improving literacy skills for individuals with disabilities can have a positive impact on their lives in areas such as employability, income, and increased self-esteem. The Rotary Bursaries and the ABLE and SARAW Programs continue to support students with physical or developmental disabilities and provide an opportunity for these students to study alongside their non-disabled peers.

Respectfully Submitted By the Adult Literacy Committee, The Rotary Club of Calgary

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