



# Literacy Links to Employment

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## Out and About

LLSC staff can be found at community events such as:

- “Walk With Me” newcomer networking event in St. Thomas (Sept 24)
- Literacy presentation at ACFO de London-Sarnia (Oct 6)
- London Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership Strategic Planning Day (Oct 21)

## Final LMP Project Update

As we come to the end of our LMP project, we are happy to say that the past two years of working with and connecting to London immigrants has been a rewarding experience!

We have had many positive experiences through outreach, interviews and focus groups, which welcomed diverse communities to share their perspectives of literacy, and their employment goals and skills. We were able to have meaningful conversations with almost 100 immigrants, and 18 community leaders or service providers. The people we spoke with came to Canada from 33 different countries, and shared their thoughts in either English or French, in focus groups or one-on-one

interviews. We learned a lot, while increasing awareness of literacy programming and answering questions about referrals.

With the trends we identified based on these conversations, we will be making recommendations on how to deliver literacy programming to help immigrants meet their employment goals. We recently shared these recommendations in 2 webinars called “Bridging the Gap”, which drew participants from Ontario and Nova Scotia including literacy agencies, universities, colleges, school boards, immigrant support agencies and more. To see a recording of this webinar, visit our website at [www.llsc.on.ca](http://www.llsc.on.ca)

## Literacy and... Employability

Literacy plays a crucial role in employment, helping employees succeed at work and in life. According to the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network, employees with higher literacy skills earn higher incomes. Having higher literacy skills lowers unemployment rates and opens up more job opportunities. Literacy skills are also essential not only for getting a job, but for on-the-job training. With strong literacy skills, employees can successfully complete the training necessary to increase their skills and compete for promotions.



Everyone benefits in a society that ensures that all Canadians can prepare for, obtain, and keep decent paying quality employment, which is why it's so important to remember that **Literacy Links to Employment!!!**

## No Boundaries!



By Fatima Umaro, Catalina Barrios and Ayshin Mousavi

In March 2014, we started working at Literacy Link South Central with the objective of promoting literacy programs among London's multicultural communities, and connecting literacy skills with employability. We brought an extensive knowledge of the immigrant landscape in London to this job. Our experience includes years of working in the field of information science, marketing, outreach and public relations.

During this journey, we equipped

ourselves with extensive literacy knowledge; examined a number of strategies to connect with community members and service providers; stored our findings in the heart of this project and shared outcomes with the community.

Our experience doing outreach with multicultural and immigrant communities to talk about literacy and how it connects with employment has been rewarding for us professionally and socially. During this time, we learned that there are differences in the amount of information people have about literacy, and in perspectives of adult literacy programming in London. Thanks to our successful outreach, we were able to increase awareness and connect people to adult literacy programs offered in our city.

We believe there is still some

confusion around the difference between Literacy and ESL or LINC programming. We hope to connect more fully with these systems to increase understanding, collaborate around client support, and create an even more effective network of referrals.

As a result of a wide range of learning opportunities at Literacy Link South Central, we feel we are in a better position to share knowledge effectively. We are also confident that the skills we have gained will position us even better in the labour market.

Literacy is a gateway to success and the power is in you! We consider ourselves to be life-long literacy messengers, because we believe that *literacy is knowing the world around you with no boundaries.*

## Canadian Work Experience: Volunteering

Many employers want workers who have Canadian workplace experience. It can be gained through a variety of programs like bridging programs, internship, self-employment and, most commonly, volunteering.

Volunteering can help job seekers gain practical knowledge of the Canadian workplace, practice their English or French, obtain Canadian references and develop new skills.

Working in a volunteer position shows employers that you can manage your time, complete tasks,

get along with others and make a commitment. Volunteering also gives you the chance to meet new people and, through them, expand your network, opening up opportunities you might not get otherwise.

When you're choosing a career direction, volunteering gives you a chance to explore different occupations and industry sectors. You get to know the people, the challenges and the rewards and gain a better understanding of the roles and jobs available. In addition,

volunteering can help you feel active, productive, and help you maintain confidence.

Much like the hidden job market, there are hidden volunteering opportunities as well. While not all organizations advertise for volunteer positions, there are people who create their own opportunities by walking in the door of organizations they want to connect with and asking if they can help.

When you volunteer in a role that's right for you, everybody comes out ahead. Where will your next opportunity be?

# My Story: Where There is a Will, There Are Many Ways!

By Hanan el Kotob

**I heard lots of stories which encouraged me not to give up; I decided to begin a new path.**

My name is Hanan, and I am from the Middle East. I came to Canada 2 years ago with over 10 years of experience as a physiotherapist and trainer for students. I also had long-term experience as a yoga instructor. I started yoga as a hobby but it became a job and a very important aspect in my daily life. I am a very dynamic person with deep passion towards my fields.

When I came to Canada my entire situation was changed. I had to

start over again to find a job. I learned that I had to gain Canadian work experience, but how could I get Canadian work experience if I couldn't get a job? This was a big issue for me, but I didn't give up.

I tried to explore all the major available options and opportunities. I got connected to a Literacy Program at Collège Boréal, which I found was a great support in my situation. It helped me a lot because as I was in the program, there were many counselors and tutors to help me overcome the obstacles I was facing. I met many people who had experienced similar situations, and I heard lots of stories which



encouraged me not to give up.

As a result, my new journey started. I decided to begin again on a new path. I was ready to work in any field, to be productive again and happy with myself. I attended the academic upgrading program called ACE at Collège Boréal that helped prepare me for the college program I wanted to start my new career.

I then finished the first year of a diploma in Early Child Education through Collège Boréal. Currently, I am in my 2nd year of education, and was recently hired to work at a child care center as well.

This new direction is a real blessing for me. I don't have any regrets in changing my career as a physiotherapist, because I think it was quite a positive change. Furthermore, I had so many transferable skills which I could bring to my new career. I am working with toddlers and I admire children. This new career is also giving me Canadian work experience while being very soothing, something like my yoga and even beyond that.

## Digital Literacy

Today, digital literacy (the ability to use computers and other technology) is as important as many other forms of literacy. Some employers even require proof of their applicant's digital literacy skills, and will only hire those who are computer literate. Today's employers want the people they hire to be productive in their new jobs quickly. Hiring staff that is computer literate means new employee training can be focused on the job at hand, rather than on how to use the technology required to do the job.

Many jobs in growing fields, including healthcare, customer relations and the trades, require the ability to use technology on the job. Most fields of employment, even entry-level positions in hotel housekeeping, retail, and customer service, often rely on some aspect of technology.

If you are ready to increase your literacy skills, including digital literacy, talk to one of London's local literacy programs about how they can help!

# LUSO Invites You to Get Involved

By Samantha Arrindell, Literacy Coordinator and Kiefer Davies, Literacy Assistant

Literacy touches everyone at every stage of life. It is essential for people to reach their full potential. Early childhood development and adult literacy are often discussed separately, and yet they are inter-related.

Our goal at LUSO Community Services is to empower the families we work with to become successful community members. As the Literacy Coordinator and the Summer Literacy Assistant, we support these ideals through on-the-ground interaction with our Northeast neighbourhood, a love of literacy, and investment in LUSO's language-based programming.

In some cases, newcomer families who lack English language skills may simply opt out of the community because of social discomfort. These barriers prevent access to outlets for community engagement, such as the ability to read street signs and resource

pamphlets, to create a resume (and subsequently, obtain a job) and as a parent, to understand provincial report cards and notes from the child's teacher. This can result in the loss of meaningful dialogue between parent and teacher. Schools and the community play key roles, in partnership with the family, in helping children develop literacy skills early on.

While some Canadian newcomers have children whose English language development surpasses their own, it does not necessarily allow them to feel engaged in their community. Some newcomer children are extremely fluent in the English language, while their parents are less so. If parents are unable to communicate, they often defer interaction to their child, becoming the parent of a Canadian child, rather than the leader of a Canadian family.

Ultimately, if newcomer parents involve themselves in programs which enhance their own literacy and language development, they

## Did You Know...?

Citizenship and Immigration Canada funds several local organizations to provide assistance for London immigrants and refugees to settle, adapt and integrate, including:

- ACFO de London-Sarnia: 519-850-2236
- Collège Boréal: 519-451-5194
- Cross Cultural Learner Centre: 519-432-1133
- LUSO Community Services: 519-452-1466
- South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre: 519-686-8600

Several of the above agencies partner with local school boards and libraries to provide Settlement Workers in Schools, and Library Settlement Workers. Be sure to ask for services to support your needs!

can be much more involved in their community and their child's development.

For more information on how you can get involved, please visit [www.lusocentre.org](http://www.lusocentre.org)

## Contact Information

Literacy Link South Central

Address: 255 Horton Street East, Suite 3, London, ON N6B 1L1

Phone: 519-681-7307

Email: [literacylink@bellnet.ca](mailto:literacylink@bellnet.ca)

Website: [www.llsc.on.ca](http://www.llsc.on.ca)

Hours: Monday to Thursday, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm



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