

# Case Studies

See the value of workplace education programs at work firsthand in these ABC Life Literacy Canada case studies.

## Glades Lodge, Nova Scotia

### The Workplace Education Program at Glades Lodge

Glades Lodge, a long-term care facility located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, has been offering workplace training programs for its employees since 2005. These programs have included academic upgrading, document use, basic computer training and communications courses. Glades Lodge and its employees recently won the Nova Scotia Workplace Education Ambassador Award for 2009.

In 2008, Glades installed computers on care units but found that many people could not operate them. As a result, the facility began to offer basic computer training and established a computer lab with ten computers on its premises.

The Program's project team is composed of managers, union representatives, employees and a representative from the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development. Together members identify educational needs and organize the courses. Program participants contribute 50% of their own time. Each program is tailored to the needs at Glades Lodge. Instructor costs and ongoing support costs are partly covered by the Department of Labour and Workforce Development.

### Program Impacts

Managers, union representatives and program participants all attest to the enormous impact of the Workplace Education Program. They all comment on the confidence that program participants have gained. This increased confidence is the foundation for other impacts.

Senior managers indicate that a better skilled workforce leads to improved care for residents, a thirst for learning, more independence and more adaptability. Improved independence saves time and makes for a more efficient workplace. Employees are also taking on increased leadership at work.

Anna Ordinelli, administrator for Glades Lodge explains that employees are taking much more initiative and ownership in their work and there is more accountability. She says, "There is a feeling they can do just about anything."

Kathleen Doane, Director of Social Work echoes these impacts. She notes that staff have improved their skills, they feel empowered and that the overall quality of the work has improved. She stresses that the bar for the whole facility is raised when people are better at communication with residents and documenting.

Participants emphasize their increased confidence, comfort and sense of pride and accomplishment. They describe how they learned to chart and do resident documentation, something as Continuing Care Assistants they did not have to do in the past. They explain that it is important to be accurate because charts are legal documents. They acknowledge wanting to better themselves at work but also for their children. Donald Fougere project team member from CUPE Local 1259 emphasizes that techniques participants learn in the communication course also help at home with their families.

### Success factors

Success factors are many, including important factors are having the program take place during work time with an employer contribution at no cost. Many employees could not afford the cost or time of such a course outside work. The important financial contribution and support from the Department of Labour and Workforce Development was emphasized.

Other success factors are keeping groups small and having courses with co-workers. Learning with co-workers creates comfort and builds teamwork. People know each other well and there is no judgement.

Senior management underlines the point that the investment in workplace education is worth it. Anna Ordinelli emphasizes that the program has continued for so long because of the strong commitment from both managers and workers.

Monique Natividad, Director of Recreation says it all, "Workplace education is so important because we want to invest in our staff and have them be the best that they can be." ■

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