
Annual General Report

August 1, 2007
to
July 31, 2008



"People's lives enriched through literacy."

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Literacy for Life Foundation

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Overview

Literacy for Life Foundation is celebrating 10 years as an organization. An organization's life is a journey, with many choices, challenges, and obstacles along the way. Over the last ten years many volunteers, staff and supporters have been part of this journey and it is due to their passion and commitment that the journey continues.

Nonprofit organizations typically move through five stages of development¹. Literacy for Life Foundation is at the "Ground and Grow" stage. The organization is concerned with building its foundation by grounding its activities and growing the "business." The overriding question is "How can we build this to be viable and sustainable and stay true to our mission and vision?"

As demonstrated by the process of developing the first business plan² of the organization, staff and board are now focused on establishing and strengthening systems of accountability at the same time facing growth on multiple fronts. The "Ground and Grow" Stage is about "taking care of business" and at the same time facing numerous intersections, choices, and challenges.

As the organization goes from reaction and survival to a more structured framework at times it will feel like the activities are mundane and restrictive compared to earlier stages. To staff, agency partners, supporters and clients it may feel less responsive from previous growth stages of the organization. It is important to note that the Board and Executive Director are aware of this and have acknowledged the importance of continuing to ask questions and to pay attention to the environment. The organization will continue as in past years to respond to their clients and to unexpected opportunities.

The Board is committed to the framework laid out in the Business Plan (2008 – 2011) and will continue to bring it forward as a foundation for the organization's future growth and sustainability. Roles and responsibilities of the Board and staff will be further defined with a review of necessary skills, knowledge and talent needed to continue to achieve desired results.

Commitment to learning and acquiring the needed skills and knowledge will continue to be at the forefront for all individuals within the organization. The plan supports the acquisition of skills and knowledge and builds on the strengths and talents within the organization.

The Business Plan is a living document and will be responsive to the needs of the staff, clients and the environment.

¹ "Judy Sharken Simon's *The Five Life Stages of Nonprofit Organizations*"

² Available at www.litforlife.com, call 403-652-5090 or email lfladmin@telus.net for a copy.

Literacy for Life Foundation

Annual General Report

August 1st 2007 to July 31st 2008

Over the next three years as laid out in the plan the organization will continue to strive to meet the mission and vision of the organization. The results that come from this will create a community where:

- Individuals, agencies and businesses (the community) will have knowledge of literacy in its broadest definition and the impact on the social, economic, mental and physical health of the community.
- Individuals, agencies and businesses (the community) will respond and support community members through sharing relevant practical strategies and tools that integrate and recognize the impact of literacy and learning on an individual and/or family.
- Parents will seek out a continual ongoing exchange of ideas to keep potential at a maximum - theirs and their children's.
- Adults will recognize the need for lifelong learning for themselves and the impact this has on their children and/or their wellness.
- Adults will seek out and engage in lifelong learning opportunities in the community – for themselves and their family.

Acknowledgements

Each year the success of Literacy for Life Foundation is directly related to the many volunteers and staff that work to provide community members with literacy resources.

The Board of Directors for 2007 – 2008 contributed their knowledge, passion and many volunteer hours. Two board members will be leaving in October 2008 after more than 4 years on the board. Deb Sicotte has been the chairman and brought her passion for literacy and commitment to children to her position. Ellen Hamilton has been treasurer for the last 4 years. This position holds a great deal of responsibility and she has followed through with integrity and good humor. The contributions made by these two board members are good examples of how the community has contributed to Literacy for Life Foundation's success.

The success of the organization is not only due to our board volunteers but to many others that have offered their time and support.

Thank you to the tutors in the adult literacy program. They are a dedicated group of individuals that continue to make a difference for the learners they work with. They bring their time, expertise and caring to the adults that need support in their literacy development which translates to changes emotionally, socially and economically.

Literacy for Life Foundation

Annual General Report

August 1st 2007 to July 31st 2008

Literacy for Life Foundation cannot provide service in our adult program without our generous volunteers and many thanks are extended to these dedicated individuals. Thank you also to our contract teachers with our ESL and GED programs. They provide excellent service and also contribute volunteer hours above and beyond their contract hours.

The community continues to support our family literacy programs. The Books for Babies is dependent upon the volunteers that sew the bags. The High River Library commits space, staff time and volunteer hours to the program. The Okotoks Wellness Centre has contributed space, staff time and a place for volunteers to meet to ensure we are able to provide a bag to all new babies in the MD of Foothills. Thank you also to LDS church in Okotoks for their contributions for the Books for Babies Program and the Rhyme groups.

Many individuals that sew bags for the program are anonymous as they drop the bags off after sewing them a home. The agencies and individuals that continue to support the work are invaluable and are the reason Literacy for Life remains strong and vibrant.

Volunteers contributed their time for the Wheels for Words Charity Motorcycle Ride event which was held in June 2008. The Ride raised approximately \$14,000.00.

Thank you to Bob McCracken who volunteered his professional time to do the year-end financial and charity reporting.

Sandra Oleksiw the Adult Literacy Coordinator has continued to recruit and train volunteers for our organization. Our English as a Second Language classes are growing due to our population growth and she is working diligently to find ways to offer more language classes.

The Family Literacy programs continue to grow and Tracy Howk Family Literacy Coordinator has contributed many hours of paid and volunteer time to ensure our programs are maintained and continue to be family centered.

Barb Milligan who filled the position of Literacy Resource Assistant has moved on to other endeavors. Thank you for you and your family's commitment to the organization. The Literacy Resource Assistant position has been replaced with an Office Manager position due to the changing needs of the organization.

Welcome to Virginia Tyler who began the position of Office Manager August 1st 2008.

The commitment and creativity of our staff has created quality programs that are unique in our province. They continue to train and work on finding different and more effective ways of helping the families in our community. The Literacy Builders are a key component in the success of our family literacy programs. Thank you to all present and past Builders for the work that has been accomplished over the last 10 years.

Literacy for Life Foundation

Annual General Report

August 1st 2007 to July 31st 2008

Programs in 2007 - 2008 (August 1st 2007 to July 31st 2008)

Our programs continue to grow. The Books for Babies program distributed over 700 bags. A partnership with the Parent Link was developed in the spring. As a result of this partnership programs for 3 and 4 year olds and their parents will be offered in High River, Okotoks, Black Diamond, Cayley and Blackie. Work has been done on the manuals for our programs ensuring consistency and quality across the MD.

Family Literacy staff was provided with training in “Developing Capable People” and this resulted in an increased ability in Literacy Builders to share skills and strategies with parents on building resiliencies in children. A stand- alone series of classes was also offered.

The organization continues to work on the Essential Skills Project funded by the federal government. Essential Skills activities and language are integrated into all programs run by the organization. This project is in partnership with Rainbow Literacy out of Vulcan. One of the activities that developed from this venture was the Great Amazing Skills Quest. The family literacy staff did an amazing job of designing activities and an evening of fun with parents and children. It focused on the nine essential skills and was held at two schools in the MD. Plans are in the works to provide it to further schools in 08-09.

Contract of service to Cargill to provide English as a Second Language classes has been successful for the students, business and financially for our organization. The need for classes in this area continues to grow. Literacy for Life Foundation and others in the community has identified this as a need and the development of this program will be part of the work plan within the Business Plan

“Work a Day in my Shoes” funded by United Way High River has been a successful addition to our programming. This project was in partnership with Special Needs Association for Parent and Siblings (SNAPS) and Foothills Fetal Alcohol Society. Seminars were offered to business in the community that looked at how to support individuals with hidden barriers within the work place. These seminars will continue to be developed over the coming program year. Also as part of the project, funds were made available to inventory all three organizations’ resources and enter them into an online database.

Our method of evaluation of family and adult literacy programs has been revised. Data collected will be linked to project logic models which are linked to outcomes. (Change) The change in evaluation methods will provide better information to assist staff in determining benefit to individuals, families and community that we serve.

Literacy for Life Foundation

Annual General Report

August 1st 2007 to July 31st 2008

An exciting opportunity materialized through a partnership with the United Church in Turner Valley. It had been recognized that due to growth in staffing and programs that the existing space in the Literacy for Life Foundation building was no longer sufficient. With the desire to have a greater presence in the West End, the need for space and the strong working relationship with the church, it was determined that this was an opportune time to open a satellite office. As of August 1st 2008 the Family Literacy Coordinator will be based out of the Turner Valley Literacy for Life office located in the United Church. The Adult Literacy Coordinator and other staff will use the space as well. (403-933-5092)

Summary

The organization has gone through an intense process over the last year. We have asked and answered the following 4 questions in our Business Plan.

- Why do we want to make a difference?
- What do we and others do to make a difference now?
- What difference would we like to make?
- What difference will we make?

The fifth question, “**What will we do to make the differences happen?**” will be answered through an ongoing participatory process that will create a map to follow over the next three years to ensure we continue to have reason to celebrate the next decade’s worth of accomplishments.

Many people have contributed time, skills, funds and passion over the last 10 years to create a strong reputable organization that is dedicated to supporting families, individuals and community reach their literacy potential.

Thank you to all that have made the 2007 2008 year successful as while as those individuals from past years that have been instrumental in facilitating the 2008 10th year celebration.



Prepared by:
Sue Stegmeier
Executive Director
October 16th 2008

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Annual General Report

August 1st 2007 to July 31st 2008

Budget Notes:

Wages have been increased across all positions. Based on research of other organizations and similar jobs the organization is now within an acceptable competitive range for like jobs and organizations.

Health Spending Account and Personal Development Account have been added for staff benefits. This will be reviewed yearly and will be dependent on available resources.

Office in Turner Valley has resulted in an increase in rent and telephone.

Adult Literacy budget has increased and this is due to the contract classes for ESL and work place literacy. The expenses have increased however revenue is generated that covers costs and provides revenue. The revenue will be directed by to the community.

Mileage: Increased from .40 km to .45 km

Office Manger and Adult Literacy Coordinator hours have been increased. Office manager is at 28 hours a week (permanent part time) and adult literacy coordinator is at 35 hours a week (permanent part time).

For more detailed information contact the office. All financial information is available to the membership.