Giving adults in Strafford County a second chance, a fresh start or a new opportunity.

Director's Message

The halls in the McConnell Center are temporarily quiet in the lull between graduation and the start of the summer session. Only a few tutoring pairs meet and talk quietly together. This is the magical time when the rewards of our yearlong work settle in, and the new year begins take shape.

Two hundred thirty-five graduates, 37 of them in the adult high school diploma program, finished high school. That’s a new record for Dover Adult High School! Eighty new high school graduates walked across the stage at Dover High School on a recent Thursday to receive their diplomas, certificates, scholarships and awards. How proud and joyous an event!

This year’s GED graduates will be among the last ones to be called “GED graduates”. When we transition next year to the new high school equivalency test, HiSET, we will have to call them HiSET graduates!

This year, ten immigrants have earned, or are in the process of earning, US citizenship. Fifty more have gained critical skills and knowledge to help them assimilate into the culture of their new home in Dover through our US Citizenship and civics classes. In total, more than 200 people have improved their English listening and speaking skills.

They come from more than 35 different countries including Brazil, Cambodia, China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, India, Iran, Japan, Morocco, Poland, Tajikistan, Turkey and Venezuela. On June 5 & 6, each culture was celebrated with food, traditional clothing, cultural artifacts and more food!

With our ESOL population growing, demand for classes is increasing, so next year we’ll be adding a level of ESOL instruction, and introducing “elective” classes in grammar and pronunciation.

Our Board has been busy developing a new three-year strategic plan that includes some exciting new initiatives in career pathways, and our new website is due to be launched this summer.

Even as we pause to appreciate and reflect on our accomplishments, we are looking ahead to what new endeavors we will pursue. Just as I tell our graduates every year, graduation is called a “commencement” for a very good reason. One important chapter has come to an end, but following right behind is another exciting adventure!

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In Their Own Words...

Free Because of Incarceration… By C.C.

I'm free because of incarceration... by C.C.

I'm free being locked up in jail. One would say this person's noodles have slid off his plate. Not too long ago, I would have agreed with you, the reader. Please let me explain. I am presently locked up in Strafford County Department of Corrections. Anyone local that comes to visit overnight calls it the county jail. This facility runs a three-month, intense drug and alcohol recovery program called the Therapeutic Community. This amazing program teaches addicts and alcoholics the tools of recovery; however, this program offers inmates much more than just recovery. It also offers a full relapse prevention package, which are new thinking patterns, key relationship tips, and healthy living strategies. Being proactive in all elements of recovery is the key to success. I have lived my life in a daily nightmare because of addiction. Now that I'm locked up and living in recovery, I'm free.

In their own words, published by DALC since 1989, is a collection of original writings. In poetry, personal reflection and artwork, adult students reveal their diversity, as well as their commonality as learners.

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Center Stars - Maryana, Ray and Fred

Maryana and her husband, Michael, lived in Russia in the large city of Ivanovo which is near Moscow. She says that living in Russia now is difficult due to corruption; and that the roads, schools, and hospitals are not very good, so they both wanted to come to the U.S.

As luck would have it, they applied for the lottery to get green cards to come to the U.S. and won the first year they tried! With their winning tickets, they were able to travel to the U.S. to live and work. Michael was able to get a full-time job. They have only one car, but they both have licenses. Maryana was able to get a job during the Christmas season at the mall as a sales person. Her English had to improve. She says they both live near a pond, and that the neighbors are not nearby. They do not have a tv. So, Maryana learns English with lots of hard work. She laughs as she says that talking with her Russian family on Skype is not good as she cannot practice her English.

And, to top things off, Michael often jumps in and speaks for Maryana. Michael’s fault, definitely! Michael has been in Intermediate classes but just tested into the more advanced class. Maryana added that Michael works, so his English is improving daily. They both just began conversation- al English with a volunteer tutor, Olga.

In Russia Maryana was an artist. Her favorite theme is the outdoors and nature. For 10-12 years, she illustrated children’s books. She has begun to paint here. She has been up to the Nubble Lighthouse in Cape Neddick to paint.

Also keeping her company are their two small, curly-haired cats, Boni and Richi. They were fortunately able to bring them from Russia, and it is obvious they bring Maryana much delight and company.

Maryana has enjoyed Martha’s class-the games, reading, writing, and listening to the English language. She admits she does not like to write in English, but it is obvious she will learn. And, probably, not maybe, they will both get their citizenship...if Michael would just let Maryana speak!

Ray Stackpole can talk for hours about race horses. He spent many years taking care of horses before and after some of the biggest races. Now Ray volunteers at the horse stables of the Dover Police Department. He also goes to the Senior Center to play cards every Tuesday. And before he plays cards, he meets with his tutor to learn how to read. Ray struggles to connect the right sound with the right consonant. Vowel sounds are even harder. But Ray keeps coming every Tuesday to meet with his very patient tutor, Heather Carney. Ray feels good about learning to read. He is a true example of the wise saying, “It’s never too late to learn.”

Fred Maloy has had to cut back on many of his activities, like driving, due to his Parkinson’s disease. But as far as reading goes, he devotes several hours a day to improving his reading.

Fred will be 80 this summer. Before he retired, he could not read. Even when he was a foreman on the job, no one knew he could not read. In his early 70s he decided to come to Dover Adult Learning Center, where he got special one-on-one tutoring for reading. Now, slowly but surely, he reads stories in the workbooks that his tutor provides for him. He is always amazed when he can easily read long words like apartment and newspaper, but struggles to decode short, common words like what and where. He knows that he has dyslexia, a word processing disability, but he knows that he is now actually reading. That’s rewarding enough to someone who once was illiterate.

A Donor’s Tale...Former Student Publishes Book & Donates First Royalty

Danny Boy A Memoir

In spring of 2011, Dover resident, Don McCullough, enrolled in an advanced writing class facilitated by Sue Wheeler at Dover Adult Learning Center. He had a manuscript in the works for a story he’d been carrying with him since he was 12 years old. A forced period of inactivity following a motorcycle accident on Father’s day of 2010 had him typing away at his laptop, turning his story into a written memoir. Each week he would share excerpts. The feedback was encouraging enough that McCullough went on to share his manuscript with friends, neighbors, family members and eventually a Dover book club. All of the feedback helped to create the book that it is today. McCullough received his first royalty check for $135 from Amazon book sales which he donated to Dover Adult Learning Center to help future writing students. “If the program can help another aspiring writer, I want to support that.”

The Seasons of Life

Barbara Murray started working for DALC in January of 2002. She teaches Adult Basic Education classes in Rochester and Farmington. Murray has a varied background including Chair of the Math Dept and Dean of Girls at St Monica High School in California, computer studies teacher and mainframe computer programming.

In her book, The Seasons of Life, a woman goes into the woods searching for an answer to the meaning of life. She comes out with an answer that may surprise you.
Your Donations at Work...Rotary Club of Dover Supports Education

Located in the McConnell Community Center, Dover Adult Learning Center of Strafford County helps adults in the Strafford County area enhance their life-coping skills and improve their lives through basic education, job training, high school completion and enrichment classes. We help our students become more effective lifelong learners, family members, workers and citizens.

Each year the Rotary Club of Dover awards scholarships to students from the Dover Adult Learning Center, to recognize their achievements and to encourage others. At the recent graduation ceremony, the Dover Rotary Club presented scholarships of $750 each to two DALC graduates. The Rotary Club provides smaller scholarships throughout the year for GED testing fees and adult high school tuition, in addition to the $1,500 in graduation scholarships for post-secondary education. Rotary has been giving the scholarships since the mid 80’s. About twice a year, Dover Adult Learning Center staff and students present an update to the Rotary Club on current activities at the Center. Recently, students preparing for citizenship talked about their experiences in conjunction with a NH Bar Association campaign to educate people about the process. Additional presentations included, an update of where past recipients are now, GED closeout and the 2014 HiSET transition.