

Excellent Educators Day: Pat Daley

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Pat Daley is an adult education tutor with Next Step Literacy Council in Alliston.

Pat has a background in Journalism and Public Relations. She worked for many years in a large union where she was actively involved with the labour movement.

She first became involved in adult education back when the province funded workplace upgrading classes, but she says that funding has since been cut.

Pat feels knowledge is power, and if you can't access information, you don't have the power you need to get by in this world. Here is the full interview with Pat Daley.

Interviewer: We asked Pat, what are the challenges you face in a job that are not specific to the pandemic?

Pat: Well, one of the biggest challenges is helping students overcome their own feeling of inadequacy. I have only worked with a couple of people so far, but I would say that they underestimate sometimes how much they actually know. And you're trying to overcome the negative things that some people get out of the school system. Because it just doesn't speak to them or work for them. So trying to address those past fears maybe about learning and feelings of 'I can't learn' or 'I am just no good at it'. There's a certain amount of that involved in just building people up and saying 'yes you can learn' and in fact you have learnt already, you just don't realize what you know sometimes. With the pandemic it's been very difficult because it's really important, especially with reading, to be able to be side-by-side, we often do companion reading where you might read together out loud so you're reading the same thing and you're beside each other. If, when I had a, I was working together with somebody, I had been working with already, prior to the pandemic, we were able to continue using video chat because we had an established relationship and a routine that we were going through, and we'd already been working for some time with each other, but, since then the thought of trying to start with somebody new is really quite daunting because it's hard to establish a trust relationship when you can't be right beside somebody. Especially somebody who has taken the very big step of coming in and say 'I need some help'.

Interviewer: Do you impress upon your students that the hardest part is over, that they call Next Step to get assistance?

Pat: Oh I think so, I mean generally, I would say the people who come in are very motivated to learn because they have taken that step, they said that: 'yes I am admitting that I need some help and I am taking the steps to seek it out'. I think it's very courageous.

Interviewer: What advice would you give to someone interested in becoming a tutor, an adult literacy tutor?

Pat: Well, one of the biggest things, I think, that we sort of had to overcome from my own school experiences, is that when you're working with adults in particular, the process is driven by the learner, it's not driven by the curriculum. You know, when we go to school, we know that within a certain period of time we're supposed to learn these things and be able to pass these tests and do it in all, you know all in, at whatever grade level you're at. This is more addressed to the needs of the people who are doing the learning. So if it's their priority to be able to make a budget and keep a shopping list every week, then those are maybe the things you focus on or the context that you're teaching in. It's driven by the learner and not by the teacher.

Interviewer: Thank you Pat Daley, an excellent educator!