

# NEXT STEPS

THE NEWSLETTER OF **ALSO** | ADULT AND FAMILY LITERACY IN OTTAWA

*Spring 2022*

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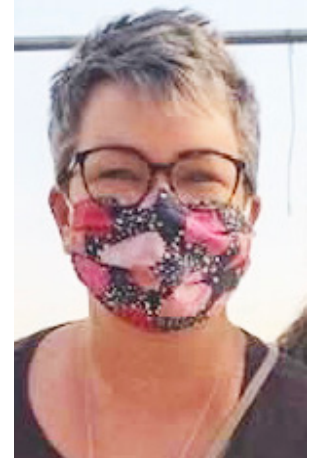


**ALSO**

ADULT AND FAMILY LITERACY

# Kim's Comments

This Spring feels especially glorious as we cautiously move towards fewer restrictions. It will take some time before we trust again and feel truly comfortable being with groups or, for some, even being outside of our homes. The ALSO classrooms are open. We encourage students to get the vaccinations offered by Ottawa Public Health and we will maintain mask wearing for the time being. Slowly the classrooms are starting to feel more social, more comfortable. Students are talking across the room. Things feel lighter. Things feel more hopeful.



During this winter's lockdown, our Children's Program remained open on-site. It is an essential service. The Community Laundry Coop (CLC) at Heartwood also remained open. Some of the members accessing the CLC could not have done so without our Children's Program. One staff member working with the CLC's social enterprise business could not have maintained employment without our Children's Program.

Yes, I am talking about a relatively small number of people. Creating significant impact for a small number of people has always been ALSO's reason for being. We strive to support the kind of things that change people's lives; skill development, connection, confidence, job readiness. Yes, we are a small program serving 120 adults and 40-50 families each year, but we make big changes in the lives of the people we serve. This is important and transformational work. We are very grateful to all of our donors and funders who make it possible for us to play a role in each person's journey towards a re-imagined life. This is our mission and it is what keeps us going year after year.

Happy Spring!

*Kim Oastler*

Executive Director, ALSO

# Success Story



## ALSO's Deaf Adult Upgrading Program

Our amazing adult literacy practitioners work with 26 Deaf adults each year, on average. Many of our Deaf students did not develop ASL language skills as children. Their families had a 'home language' which worked for the most part within their families. The result, unfortunately for the Deaf adult, is that they essentially have no first language base to rely on. ALSO literacy practitioners teach both ASL and English reading and writing. Learning ASL means that accessing the Deaf community in Ottawa becomes easier. Participating in community events, programs and services feels more comfortable and is more accessible. Learning English reading and writing is essential in order to get a job or pursue training/education. This helps to make the wider hearing community more accessible. Without a strong base in a first language, you can imagine, second language learning is even more challenging.

# Let's talk about Therese.

Therese joined ALSO's Deaf Adult Upgrading Program in 2019. With support she successfully managed the transition to online learning during the pandemic, having very little prior experience using technology for



learning. Therese's wish, in addition to developing her language skills, was to become more independent. She wanted to focus on the English reading and math skills needed in order to learn how to cook. She now sends her ALSO teacher videos of herself cooking her favourite recipes. Imagine all of the small steps she mastered to be able to, not only make the recipe successfully, but to create a video and send it to her teacher. Well done Therese!

Sometimes independence goals are not given as much attention or importance within the Employment Ontario landscape. Each step that enhances or enables independence brings you closer to being able to live independently, to being engaged in your community, to developing the confidence to express yourself as an adult. Once you can take care of yourself with confidence, you can begin to think about having a job, accessing training or education, and living independently.

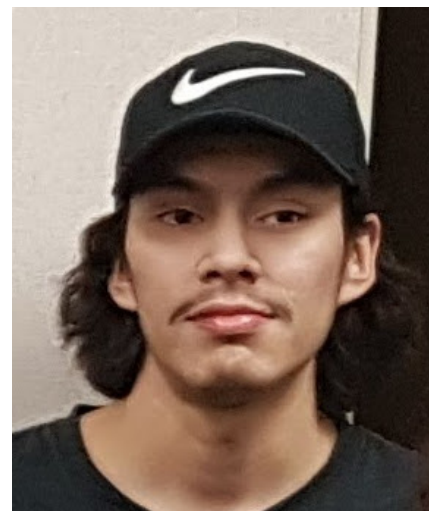
It is difficult to put a value on the support Therese has received but if you were to ask her, she would tell you that it has been immeasurable. ALSO offers tangible and impactful ways to help people become independent and hopeful about their tomorrow's and we are able to help people like Therese because of donors like you.

**DONATE NOW!**

# Get Involved

## We are sending out a huge congratulations to Peter.

Peter started working with ALSO in 2017. He has spent the last several years developing his ASL and English language skills. In addition, he has worked hard to develop the soft skills needed for education, training and employment; being on time, clear communication, attending when scheduled, staying on task, and finishing what he starts. He just got a job at Montana's, successfully navigating the online application, job interview and first few weeks of work. All of us at ALSO are very proud of Peter's success.



It can be extremely challenging for Deaf and Hard of Hearing adults to get and keep a job. 4 out of every 10 Canadians who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing want to work and cannot secure gainful employment. This is a staggering statistic.

We very gratefully receive funding from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, allowing us to offer our Adult Upgrading Programs. (THANK YOU). **This funding covers most, but not all, of what it costs to run our programs.**

This Spring, we hope to raise \$5000 to support our Deaf Adult Upgrading Program. Funds raised will go directly to front-line services, making successes like Peter's possible.

**DONATE NOW!**

ALSO is the only literacy program in Eastern Ontario serving Deaf adults. Over the last year our amazing teaching team developed a series of online workshops, allowing ALSO students and other Deaf adults living outside of Ottawa to access our program. This has definitely been a positive outcome resulting from our need to pivot during the pandemic. In order to continue developing new and innovative programming and resources, we need the support of our community. That means... you.

For Peter, ALSO's support was a pivotal factor in his success. Getting a job means that he is one step closer to being independent. He can build on this success. The confidence that comes with getting your first job can contribute to the belief that you can do more, that it is OK for you to want more, that you deserve more and that other people see it too.

As a hearing person, before ALSO took on the Deaf Adult Upgrading Program, I did not know much about the experience of Deaf and Hard of Hearing adults in our community. Now that I do, now that I see first hand, now that I am an employer of Deaf adults, I realize that so much more needs to be done to support the Deaf community in accessing the labour market, and the many other services that are an integral part of our community.

Be part of the work we do.  
Offer your support to the Deaf  
and Hard of Hearing adults  
we serve at ALSO.

With gratitude, *Kim*  
kim@also-ottawa.org



**DONATE NOW!**

# ALSO ChangeMaker

## Cheryl Stephen

Cheryl has been volunteering with ALSO for over 10 years. She supported our Reading and Parents Program (RAPP) when we were going into community settings to deliver the program. Cheryl managed the behind the scenes preparation and tracking, keeping RAPP running smoothly.



As funding changed, our delivery of RAPP changed and Cheryl shifted from on-site support to off-site support. She has an amazing talent for design. Cheryl has designed our flyers, brochures, policy manual, posters, website, social media posts and newsletters. Cheryl's designs help set the tone for ALSO, and they shape how you see us when you interact with any of the marketing materials she creates. The colours, the fonts, the style, the images all contribute to the perception you develop about who we are and what we do. She gives of her time and expertise generously. I would be hard pressed to put a dollar value on her contribution - It would be tremendous. Cheryl is not only very talented and generous, she is also energetic, optimistic, kind and dedicated to the causes she believes in. She does not look for praise or thanks, and shys away from the spotlight. She may not be super happy to be featured here but I wanted to acknowledge her contribution, and for you to know that Cheryl is an ALSO ChangeMaker extraordinaire. Cheryl is very much the heart of ALSO. Thank you Cheryl.

# Contact Us

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With 70% of employers reporting awareness of significant workplace literacy issues, ALSO is structured to accommodate a variety of learning, social and family needs, and empowers people to develop the skills required to secure employment and participate more fully within the greater Ottawa community.

**The goal for ALSO is to be in a position to continue this important work, and we know that we cannot make this happen without support from donors.**



**DONATE NOW!**