

Literacy Society wants residents to succeed

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Eckford explained that this program is particularly for reaching those types of goals and is not meant to be a free child-minding service for people who need time for other things.

"This is not for getting your masters degree in sociology and you need to study. This is more for people who are needing a little extra help to reach their goals like getting their high school diploma or learning English as a second language or things like that," she said.

With programs like this in place, the community will benefit greatly by allowing people who are struggling get the assistance they need to improve their quality of life and better their situation, she explained.

"Literacy programming has been proven to benefit communities in many different ways. Literacy programming around the world and particularly in Canada has been proven to increase the quality of life for people. It gets people out of dire situations as well," said Eckford.

She pointed out that the benefits are even more noticeable in a tight-knit community like Fort St. John.

"It's a city that wants everyone in the community to succeed. And these are the programs that do that. They help the people that help the people who feel like they have no opportunities to move forward to move forward," said Eckford.

The benefits extend beyond the parents who are able to reach their goals and to the children that get to spend their time playing as well.

"If parents think literacy is important than the children will think literacy is important. It will create an atmosphere of learning, which is really positive."

An important message that comes from this program, according to Eckford, is that literacy is not just about being able to read and write.

"Literacy is reading and writing and math and other basic skills, and that's a very important part of it, but it's also being able to reach those goals that help you to engage in the community and that help you to succeed."

For more information, call 250-785-2110 or email info@fsjliteracy.ca.

Literacy Society celebrates Oktoberfest

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They were rolling out the barrel for a good cause at the Quality Inn on Saturday night.

The Fort St. John Literacy Society held its first Oktoberfest on Saturday, October 1 to raise funds to support its programs. Guests were treated to a Bavarian feast and traditional polkas and waltzes as played by the Kiwanis Community Band, as well as a performance by local improv troupe, Spontaneous Combustion.

"We were looking for a signature event that would raise money for the Literacy Society for our programs," said Jean McFadden, Executive Director of the Literacy Society. "So, the programs that we have include one-to-one tutoring for adults. And we do have a lot of 'English as a second language' adults."

The Literacy Society decided that a culturally-themed event such as Oktoberfest was a good fit considering

they work with so many new Canadians from different cultural backgrounds.

The fundraising effort also included a silent auction. The Literacy Society was shooting for \$1000, but the actual total raised is not yet known.

McFadden indicated that these events go beyond raising funds to emphasizing the importance of literacy in the community.

"Almost 25 per cent of the population in Fort St. John between 18 and 35 haven't completed high school," said McFadden. "And so a lot of people will go out to work. We've got a lot of work in this community. So, they often leave school early and make lots of money in the oil patch or other associated industries."

But the thing is that people will work at that for a while and then get to their late twenties or early thirties and they don't want to do that anymore. They want to be more stable. And so they come back and maybe finish Grade 12."

Many of the volunteers who tutor the almost sixty people per year who use the Literacy Society's programs also donated their time to making Oktoberfest possible.

"The board of directors have donated hundreds of hours also," said McFadden. "These are just people who have a real support for literacy and the need for literacy in the community. And we just couldn't ever offer services to the people without this kind of support."

"I'm wearing a number of hats," said Clarice Eckford of Spontaneous Combustion, discussing her reason for participating in the fundraiser. "I work at the Literacy Society. But I'm also an improviser with Spontaneous Combustion. So, it was a nice fit, basically."

"It's a bit self-serving because I do work there," she admitted. "But even if I didn't work there – I mean, literacy and improv kind of go hand-in-hand. The ability to communicate and make jokes and understand cultural references."

A *holiday* message from the North Peace Literacy Society

FORT ST. JOHN - The holidays are a nice break away from school, and work. But if you have children, they may begin to drive you crazy after being home for a day or two. Keeping that mind I urge you to check out the Family Friendly Communities website which lists all the community events in the region:

<http://familyfriendlycommunity.ca>

The Library is always planning fun activities for children of all ages from 0 years to 101 years!

www.fortstjohn.bclibrary.ca

Literacy Toys

When shopping for Christmas gifts this season have literacy in mind! I know that sounds boring but there are a lot of fun gifts that also help promote literacy skills. Mega blocks teach gross motor skills for the wee ones and as they grow up switch it up to Lego to fine tune the motor skills. Developing these skills is good for the brain and also develops the muscles used for writing. For children aged 8 years and up the Easy Bake oven is a yummy way to teach literacy skills; reading recipes and using a timer. There are so many toys that are fun learning activities too – science projects, telescopes, art supplies, books,

card games, playdough crafts etc...

Have fun this Christmas Season, enjoying each other; play games, laugh and be with your wonderful friends.

Two children's advocate groups have released their annual warnings about which toys to watch out for when shopping heading into the holiday season.

The U.S. Public Research Interest Group looked at about 200 toys and determined two significant dangers: magnets and toxic toys. Toxic and excessively loud toys are also a concern. The authors of the report found one toy that exceeded the U.S.'s legal lead levels.

TIPS FOR BUYING CHILDREN'S GIFTS

Some tips for adults to keep in mind when shopping for children's gifts:

Bring an old toilet paper roll that measures 1½ - 1¾ inches in diameter. If a toy — or any of its removable parts — fit through the tube, do not purchase it for a child three years old or younger.

Beware of cheaply made, larger toys that can easily break into smaller parts.

When buying toys for families that have multiple kids, consider all their ages before buying a toy.

While a toy may be appropriate for a seven-year-old, their two-year-old sibling could choke on its parts.

Be aware that age recommendations on toys are not about intelligence, but focus on safety. "Even smart two-year-olds put things in their mouth."

Stay away from "cheap, metal jewelry." If a child swallows it, the toxins can leach into their system.

To avoid toys that are potentially toxic, consider buying unpainted, wooden toys.

Don't buy latex balloons, which can break easily and become a choking hazard for children up to the age of eight. Mierzwinski recommends Mylar balloons as a safer alternative.