NEVADA Connections

Bringing Resources to Nevada's Adult Education Community

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Mary Katherine Moen to retire

Mary Katherine Moen will retire on August 13 after serving as Nevada's adult education director for 11 years. Charged with overseeing the state's Adult Basic Education and GED Testing system, Mary Katherine focused her tenure on developing infrastructure to serve the state's rapidly expanding population of adult learners.

"I'm very proud that we've codified policy, developed an Administrator's Handbook to document it, created Adult Education Content Standards for the AEFLA-funded programs, improved our professional development system, and boosted accountability," she said. "I am extremely blessed and honored to have worked with such dedicated people doing such important work."

Mary Katherine served on the Executive Committee of the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium and is recognized as an effective advocate for adult education by her colleagues throughout the country.

She plans to move to Portland, Oregon, near her brother, sisters, children, and granddaughter Louise.

The AEFLA-funded programs will celebrate Mary Katherine's life change at the end of their annual summer retreat on Thursday, August 12 from 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. at the Plaza Picnic Pavilion (near the Brick House) at Bartley Ranch Park, 6000 Bartley Ranch Road, Reno. Contact Claudia Bianca (cbianca@tmcc.edu, 775/824-8604) by August 1 if you'd like to join the party!

Adult educators recognized for classroom performance

Congratulations to the twelve adult educators who recently earned Nevada's outcome-based ABE Certificate of Performance:

- **CSN:** Maria Concepcion Ramos Aranda, Janet Ohlinger Mejia, Debbie Simon, Kimberley Vescio-Trueman, Sara Wagenmaker
- **CATH:** Martin Dean Dupalo
- **CMC**: Jeanette Castillo, Luz Castro, Milan Devetak, Shirley Hurt
- **WNC:** Costantina Cunningham, Jennifer Hicks-Ferris

Additional kudos to the two instructors who renewed their Certificates, continuing to show exemplary student outcomes and participation in meaningful professional development during the preceding three years:

- **CSN:** Kathleen Porter-Love, Noreen Tabb-Martin

Many ways to renew

Adult educators now have many ways to earn the two professional development credits required for renewing the ABE Certificate of Performance. They include:

- Professional Learning Communities and workshops offered through Nevada State Leadership
- Continuing education and college/university coursework
- Online/Web-based courses with significant facilitator support
- Development and presentation of a high quality, meaningful workshop to a local program
- Independent study (investigate instructional issues of a particular concern, collect information, and report on processes and results)

For more information on the nation's only outcome-based recognition program, contact Ken Zutter, 775/687-7291, kzutter@doe.nv.gov or visit http://www.literacynet.org/nvabecp/.

Health literacy: can we afford to live without it?

Health Literacy is the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information well enough to make appropriate health decisions. An estimated 90 million people are affected by inadequate health literacy, and may misunderstand medical information, fail to adhere to treatments, be admitted to the hospital more frequently, and have a higher mortality rate.

Health literacy affects people's ability to:

- Navigate the healthcare system, including filling out complex forms and locating providers and services
- Share personal information, such as health history, with providers
- Engage in self-care and chronic-disease management
- Understand mathematical concepts such as probability and risk

According to research studies, persons with limited health literacy skills are more likely to skip important preventive measures such as mammograms, Pap smears, and flu shots. Compared to those with adequate health literacy skills, patients with limited health literacy skills enter the healthcare system when they are sicker. They are also more likely to have chronic conditions and are less able to manage them effectively. Patients with high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, or HIV/AIDS who have limited health literacy skills have less knowledge of their illness and its management.

> The health care industry estimates $73 billion per year of unnecessary health care expenses is attributable to poor literacy. ... This may be due to the higher rate of hospitalization and the increased number of medication and treatment errors that they experience.
>
> — *State of Adult Literacy 2005*, ProLiteracy Worldwide

Limited health literacy skills are associated with an increase in preventable hospital visits and admissions. Studies have demonstrated a higher rate of hospitalization and use of emergency services among patients with limited literacy skills and greater use of services designed to *treat* complications of disease and less use of services designed to *prevent* complications. This higher use is associated with higher healthcare costs.

Low health literacy may also have negative psychological effects. One study found that those with limited health literacy skills reported a sense of shame about their skill level. As a result, they may hide reading or vocabulary difficulties to maintain their dignity.

Health literacy also includes numeracy skills. For example, calculating cholesterol and blood sugar levels, measuring medications, and understanding nutrition labels all require math skills. Choosing between health plans or comparing prescription drug coverage requires calculating premiums, co-pays, and deductibles.

In addition to basic literacy skills, health literacy requires knowledge of health topics. People with limited health literacy often lack knowledge or have misinformation about the body as well as the nature and causes of disease. Without this knowledge, they may not understand the relationship between lifestyle factors such as diet and exercise and various health outcomes.

Health information can overwhelm even persons with advanced literacy skills. Medical science progresses rapidly. What people may have learned about health or biology during their school years often becomes outdated or forgotten, or it is incomplete. Moreover, health information provided in a stressful or unfamiliar situation is unlikely to be retained.

Data sources: *Fact Sheets: Health Literacy and Health Outcomes and Health Literacy Basics*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Plan for health literacy month

October is health literacy month, a time for organizations and individuals worldwide to promote the importance of understandable health information. It’s not too early to plan! A recent email from founder Helen Osborne suggested the following resources, all available at www.healthliteracymonth.org:

√ For 2009, we had a remarkable story-sharing project (click on “stories”)

√ *Health Literacy Month Handbook: The Event-Planning Guide for Health Literacy Advocates* (click on “resources” to order)

√ Free *What's New* e-newsletter, articles, tips, and podcasts (from the “resources” link)

Health literacy Web sites clear, useful

Source: *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal*, Spring 2010, pp 52-54

Veteran adult education consultant David Rosen recently compiled this list of clearly written Web sites suitable for adult new readers and/or their teachers.

1. The Easy-to-Read version of Medline Plus (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/easytoread/easytoread_a.html), like the regular one, pays attention to the quality, authority, and accuracy of the site's own health content and of content on the Web sites it links to. Many of the resources are available in Spanish as well as English. There is a tab to the Merriam-Webster Online Medical Dictionary, and another tab to the A.D.A.M. Medical Encyclopedia, which includes over 4,000 articles about diseases, tests, symptoms, injuries, and surgeries. The site also links to over 165 health tutorials that do not depend on reading. Most of the content on the site is free.
2. Healthy Roads Media (www.healthyroadsmedia.org/) contains free, carefully vetted health education materials in 20 languages and in a variety of formats. Topics include abuse, asthma, dental health, diabetes, diseases and conditions, exercise, health services, heart, immunization, nutrition, tobacco, and women's health. The formats include printable handouts, downloadable audio files, multimedia, Web video, mobile phone video (iPod), video on demand, and DVDs.
3. The Health Literacy Special Collection (http://healthliteracy.worlded.org/) contains many good links to health Web sites. The main features include curricula, health information, collaborations/initiatives, articles, books, and other resources on health literacy. The collection is designed to be used in health initiatives for low-literate adults.
4. Developed by the YMCA of the United States, Healthy Family Home (www.ymca.net/healthyfamilyhome) organizes activities and tips so visitors can easily find the ones that make the most sense for the family.
5. The Wellness Information Zone (http://wellzone.org) opens with a video introduction to its wellness resources in English or Spanish. This site provides information on diseases and medicines, being smart about healthcare (answers to basic healthcare questions), healthy living, and where to turn for service and care. The menus of services are clear, and content is written in plain language.
6. The Florida Literacy Coalition Health Literacy Resources offers a good collection of reviewed materials including links to Web sites, articles, and other resources.
7. Eating Right for a Healthier Life http://www.altn.org/webquests/nutrition/index.html is a Web Quest made by the Sacramento (CA) County Office of Education through funding provided by the National Institute for Literacy LINCS project. It is designed for advanced ESOL/ESL students and adult learners who have some experience using computers. Learners are expected to enter information, maneuver around the site, and find information on the Web.
8. From Junk Food to Healthy Eating is a photonovel made by immigrant women who collaboratively chose nutrition as a main topic of health concern. After a lesson from a public health nurse on eating well, they wrote this story and did all the acting and photography. Visit www.photonovel.ca/photonovels.htm.

Visit http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/ to sign up for the health literacy discussion list and access the Research-based Health Literacy Materials and Instruction Guide.

A Web Quest is an online, inquiry-oriented activity in which learners use information gathered from pre-selected Internet sites to increase their knowledge and skills. They are typically designed to make the best use of a learner's time by providing guidance and structure.

Photonovels are similar to comic books, but they are formed using photographs and print within captions. Drawing on multimodal design elements, this genre is an authentic way to engage wide ranging audiences in linguistic, symbolic, and visual patterns of meaning making.

Based on the humanizing principles of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's philosophy of problem-posing education, the process of creating a photonovel engages learners in critical dialogue about their world. Upon naming their world, learners codify their reality by writing a story. They then act it out using photography as a means to represent their message.

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NIFL update

The National Institute for Literacy will be closing its operations on September 30; services for the adult education and literacy community will be transitioned to the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE).

A new Web site with the content and functions of the current NIFL site (www.nifl.gov) will open with a *LINCS* banner on September 27. The new URL will be announced on the NIFL website prior to the Institute closure. The NIFL Web site will not be updated between August 13 and September 27 in order to prepare for the transition to the new URL.

All NIFL publications and items in the Resource Collections will be available for download in pdf format from the new Web site.

NIFL Discussion Lists will continue after the Institute closes and will be accessed through the new LINCS URL when the site goes live September 27.

NIFL's hotline number (800/228-8813) and e-mail will continue to operate without any change until September 30. Use OVAE's main phone number (202/245-7720) for any NIFL-related issue or question after September 30.

ProLiteracy's member statistics available

How does your organization compare to Pro-Literacy's other member organizations around the country? Find out in the *2008–09 ProLiteracy Annual Statistical Report.*

This information can help evaluate program efforts, identify national trends, and support fundraising efforts.

A downloadable version of the report is available from ProLiteracy's Web site.

Online courses — your time, your place

Thinkfinity Literacy Network provides more than 20 free, self-paced online courses to support educators and volunteers working with adult learners. Topics include citizenship, reading, writing, math, connecting families with computers, and many more! See the catalog at http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/TLN/courses.

I get up every morning determined to both change the world and have one hell of a good time. Sometimes this makes planning my day difficult. —E. B. White, *author & humorist (1899 - 1985)*