



SPCLC celebrates 20 years of service

Serving more than 12,000 adult learners each year, SPCLC has built a national reputation for quality services, creative programming, and community responsiveness

SPCLC will celebrate 20 years of collaborative service to St. Paul, 4-6 pm Wednesday, June 10, at the Wellstone Center, 179 Robie Street East. There will be a brief program at 5 p.m., and appetizers and drinks will be served at this free event. Please RSVP to Suzanne.McCurdy@gmail.com

In 1995, a dozen non-profits came together with the new Saint Paul Public Schools Hubbs Center to form a collaborative, community-based effort to increase adult literacy. Over the past two decades, SPCLC has grown into the largest Adult Basic Education (ABE) consortium in Minnesota, serving over 12,000 individuals annually with English language, basic literacy, GED preparation, adult diploma, and career pathways training.

SPCLC continues to receive national recognition for effective community-based collaboration, innovative programs in digital literacy and distance learning, the new College Readiness Academy, career pathways development, robust public policy efforts, and many other projects. SPCLC was the first Minnesota ABE consortium to actively work with the Minnesota legislature to increase support for ABE services, and to develop policies supporting ABE expansion and quality.

The consortium has served as a collaborative partner and incubator for a number of important projects; these include the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment, now used in over 200 sites in 25 states; and the Minnesota Learner Web, now used statewide as a distance learning platform and as a portfolio storage and tracking tool for the new Minnesota Adult Diploma.

Through the Hubbs Center, SPCLC provides statewide leadership for ABE distance learning under a special state grant. Many member agency and SPCLC staff have served in leadership positions for Literacy Action Network, and as trainers both locally and at the state and national levels.

Among the strongest features of SPCLC have been consistent membership and leadership. Seven of the ten current member agencies have been part of the group since it began, as has the facilitator. At the same time, members have been added over the years to reflect the changing needs and demographics in St. Paul.

SPCLC member agencies include: Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES), Guadalupe Alternative Programs, Hmong American Partnership, Hmong Cultural Center, International Institute, Lifetrack Resources, Minnesota Literacy Council, MORE, Neighborhood House, Saint Paul Public Schools ABE, Saint Paul Public Library, and Vietnamese Social Services.

Metrix to meet E-Learning needs

SPCLC is joining Saint Paul Public Library as a partner in a new E-Learning pilot venture that will allow St. Paul residents access to a variety of free online learning courses leading to industry-recognized credentials. The project will begin a limited 60-day beta test in June. A public launch of the project is scheduled for three SPPL libraries - Arlington Hills, Sun Ray and Rondo - in August.

The project aims to increase workforce skills using on-line learning and job-related certifications, expand workforce education and training options available in Saint Paul, and strengthen cross-system connections to create clearer pathways for learners.

Metrix, a proprietary portal, bundles a wide variety of courses ranging from basic to advanced. “Metrix Learning offers a catalog of more than 5,000 courses in business, healthcare, information technology, desktop, Microsoft, Quickbooks and more,” said Mildred F. Williams, E-Learning Coordinator for Better Jobs.

Mildred explains that Metrix includes a free process to allow users to identify job goals and assess current knowledge. “Learners can then create a plan to learn at their own pace with on-site support from library staff, or, when more convenient, learn remotely. Industry-recognized certifications in programs like Quickbooks or Microsoft Word and Excel raise applicants’ profiles with potential employers and enhance job seeking outcomes.”

There will be regularly scheduled information meetings to introduce the program to residents, and weekly ‘learning labs’ with support to help individuals with their online learning. The project will provide personalized support for learners, using mentors, volunteers, and/or staff to regularly check-in with users to help them stay on-track and reach their goals.

The project is targeted at lower skilled adults seeking higher paying jobs; out-of-school youth seeking pathways to post-secondary and career success; and small-business entrepreneurs seeking to improve business skills. Once courses are completed, participants can complete certification exams online to assess their expertise. While courses are free, participants might need to pay some testing fees themselves except in some specific circumstances.

SPCLC hopes to use Metrix to allow current learners to add depth and intensity to their classroom studies, focusing on specific job-related learning. It will allow learners to use online resources at libraries or from home, at times convenient to them, to expand their educational and thus career options.

Hubbs honors first Adult Diploma grads

The Hubbs Center just awarded its first two Minnesota Adult Diplomas. Amy Stotzheim, advisor for the pilot project, noted, “Alonzo Williams was in his mid-50s when he entered the program. He had been working on his GED for several years, but hadn’t finished the math. When this program opened up, he was a prime candidate.” Alonzo plans to attend Saint Paul College, hopefully training to be a CD counselor.

Richard Epps, in his 20s, started in March, and was able to finish in two months. He has already been accepted to Saint Paul College, and plans to start this summer.

Amy described some challenges in implementing the new diploma: “Getting through the transcripts and making sure everything is in place – the biggest obstacle is the time it takes to get some of the information, especially when we need materials from out of state (such as transcripts).” She added that getting people to come in after they call initially can also be difficult. “I think it’s just the fear of coming in and taking the placement test,” she noted.

The Diploma is tailored to the experiences, skills, and needs of each student. Amy said finding lessons that fit what individual students need, while meeting state requirements, requires significant staff time.



Hubbs supervisor Scott Hall congratulates Alonzo Williams.

By the numbers

- **SPCLC provided** 1,219,625 contact service hours for the program year ending April 30, a nearly 3% increase over the previous year; 12,155 adult learners accessed services, almost exactly the same as the prior year. This indicates greater retention of students in classes, which can help increase educational gains.