

For immediate release Friday, December 11, 2009

Oakville Literacy Council growing to meet community needs

A new Speers Road address is helping the Oakville Literacy Council meet increasing demand for its services.

On December 11, during an official opening event, volunteers, students, and staff welcomed visitors to the Council's new location at 1200 Speers Rd.

"More and more adults are learning of the necessity of improving their literacy skills in a difficult job market," said Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn. "I am delighted to hear the Ontario Trillium Foundation's grant will help the Oakville Literacy Council expand and continue to strengthen its program that improves the literacy skills of Oakville's adults."

For many years, the Council had a one-room office in the basement of the Woodside Branch of the Oakville Public Library. This past summer, with financial support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Oakville Literacy Council moved into a 1,000-square-foot program office at 1200 Speers Rd. The space can accommodate recent increases in part-time staff, and has a separate room for tutors and students to meet for lessons. They also maintain their original office at Woodside Library.

The Oakville Literacy Council is a charitable organization dedicated to helping adults improve their literacy skills. It is the only organization in Oakville offering free, customized, one-on-one tutoring to adult students.

"We are delighted to have a larger program office," says Bernie Martenson, President of the Oakville Literacy Council. "We were eager to celebrate our expansion with our friends and show off the important work we do for the community."

The Ontario Trillium provided a three-year, \$157,200 in 2008 to the Oakville Literacy Council to increase staff hours to support additional outreach, fundraising, and partnership development to increase the capacity of the organization to support literacy students.

Martenson calls the Ontario Trillium Foundation funding "a solid foundation for growth."

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“Now we have to reach out to our friends and neighbours in Oakville to help us maintain and expand our resources and our capacity to help people,” she says. “Oakville is growing and changing, and the job market is tougher than ever. More and more local adults need to upgrade their literacy skills. That increasing demand, combined with our commitment to individualized learning for students, puts stress on the limited resources of our organization.”

Right now the Oakville Literacy Council has 70 students on its roster. In 2008 they served 53 students over the entire year. Although they trained twice as many volunteer tutors this year compared to last, all available tutors are now matched with students, leaving a list of students waiting for the next batch of tutors to be trained in February.

“As we grow, we have an even better opportunity to strengthen our community,” Martenson says. “That’s an opportunity not to be missed.”

The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Government of Ontario. It continues to strengthen the capacity of the volunteer sector through investments in community-based initiatives. For more information, visit www.trilliumfoundation.org.

For more information about the Oakville Literacy Council, visit www.oakvilleliteracy.ca or call 905 469 8528.

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