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A United Way Member Agency

NEWS RELEASE

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Literacy Day celebration meant to attract adult learners

In a community brimming with economic prosperity and social opportunity, few people think about the local adults who struggle with basic reading and writing.

But they are out there, and the Oakville Literacy Council hopes you'll help find them.

This Friday, September 8, has been officially proclaimed Literacy Day in Oakville by Mayor Ann Mulvale. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) celebrates International Literacy Day on September 8 every year.

Oakville Literacy Council members sought out the local designation to help spread the word about its services. The non-profit volunteer group offers free, confidential, one-on-one tutoring to adults in reading, writing, and basic math.

In the proclamation, Mayor Mulvale says, "I would urge all residents to support the activities of the Oakville Literacy Council, especially by encouraging potential adult students to take advantage of their learning program."

Council President Maureen O'Keefe says the group faces a unique challenge. "Unlike other helping agencies, we often have trouble finding and engaging potential clients," she says. "We can't reach them with traditional printed advertising, for example, and even if they know we're here to help, they might be embarrassed about their difficulty, even trying to hide it. We rely very much on individuals in the community to encourage people they know to call us."

And it's likely that you do know someone who could use some help. According to a Statistics Canada study released in 2005, four out of 10 adult Canadians, age 16 to 65 – representing 9 million Canadians – struggle with low literacy.

O'Keefe wants everyone to know that Oakville has a problem, too. "Consider the fact that about 23% of Oakville's labour force between the ages of 35 and 65 has less than a high school education," she says.

This Friday, September 8, at 11 a.m., Council members and friends will gather in Centre Court at Hopedale Mall to celebrate Literacy Day. Oakville Town Crier Ian Burkholder will read the Mayor's new proclamation. Everyone is welcome.

To find out more about literacy activities in Oakville, contact the Oakville Literacy Council office at (905) 469-8528 or visit www.oakvilleliteracy.ca.

“People don’t have to live with a barrier in their lives,” O’Keefe says. “Improving your literacy skills changes your life because it affects everything you do.”

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