Life Literacy

Interim Report to the National Literacy Secretariat
July, 2002

Brief Project Description:
To assess the program needs of young women 16-24 who are unemployed, or have been out of school for a year or more, and to create a proposal to address the identified needs.

Summary to Date:
This project began in April of this year and will be completed at the end of September. My research assistant Flora Murphy, and I are in the process of creating a holistic literacy needs assessment with the aid of two independent groups of young women. The groups are composed of unemployed/out of school young women from Antigonish County and Afton. We have met with each group twice, and plan to meet at least two more times with each group over the course of the summer.

In the original Life Literacy proposal we had planned to obtain a commitment from the young women participants, in the form of regular attendance at scheduled meetings, and completion of various self-identified tasks, for which we intended to provide an honorarium of $1,000.00 to each woman at the end of the program. However, our efforts to invite young women to participate in this way were unsuccessful. It is our belief that the young women we hope to work with are not yet in a position where they feel able to participate in the ways we had envisioned. Therefore we have redesigned the roles of participants to reflect this finding.

At present, young women are invited to participate in group meetings to discuss needs and existing capacities. They receive a $25.00 honorarium for each meeting they attend, but are not required to commit to any further meetings or activities. Participants are responding to this less-formalized approach, and express a desire to continue meeting - possibly even beyond the end of the project. We are attempting to nurture these groups, and encourage them to develop their own goals and leadership. As well, working with the groups is enabling us to assess the gaps in service to young women in our community who are facing challenges with regard to education and employment. Our goal over the next couple of months is to work with the groups to prioritize these gaps and barriers, and to develop and propose a program model that will address those priorities.

We intend to submit a re-working of our budget that reflects the changes we have made to this program in the near future.

We are continuing to engage with community service providers in order to create an awareness among our participants about literacy, education, or back-to-work programs that are currently available. Information sharing continues to be a useful aspect of this work for everyone involved.

Pamela Fry
Project Coordinator