

Charlotte's Literacy Web

The Adult Learning Center

May 2011

INSTRUCTOR TEACHES FROM EXPERIENCE AS A GED GRADUATE

Dorothy (“Dusty”) Maino is the first person at the Adult Learning Center whom prospective students meet when they enter our adult literacy program. In addition to teaching in the learning lab, she handles new student orientation and testing, discusses career path choices, and outlines a program of study for each student. It is crucial that this experience be a positive one for our students as they often have some apprehension about testing and continuing education after many years away from the academic world. Dusty understands the difficulty with which some students enter the program, often embarrassed by their failures. Her philosophy is: “Do not dwell on the past...that was then, and this is now – so, let’s get started! Any questions?”



Instructor Dusty Maino

Dusty dropped out of school just before the end of her junior year of high school to get married and start a family. She promised herself she would finish high school and, one day, go to college. Her journey was slow, but steady. It began with three months in GED class, much like the one here. Her next step was attending a community college, four years *part-time*, to earn an Associate degree

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STUDENT TASHA ADAMS HAS HER EYE ON THE GED PRIZE



Student Tasha Adams

If you spend any time at the Adult Learning Center, you quickly realize that adult education students come in all shapes and sizes. Tasha Adams is an example of a student who has raised a family and supported herself and her kids without a high school diploma by working as a waitress, bartender, and cashier. When she lost her job last July as a cashier at Goodwill, she decided it was time to make a change in her life. She had heard about the Center from a neighbor and stopped by to check us out.

The first step was to complete her TABE testing with instructor Dusty Maino. The TABE is comprised of three primary assessment areas—reading, language, and math. Tasha’s results indicated that math was her weakest of these three areas, so she started there. Tasha was nervous when she

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Online Learning Program

Online learning is a great way for Adult Learning Center students to improve their education from the comfort of their own homes. The program is available to students who are working towards obtaining their GED and to students who would like to enroll in a course at the Charlotte Technical Center whose TABE scores are not high enough to qualify them for admission. The advantage of online learning is that it is available to students twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. Students determine their own schedules and learn at their convenience. The only requirements are a computer and access to the internet.

There are two online programs available for Adult Learning Center students: My Skills Tutor and a GED Online course. To be considered for the online learning program, a student must first be tested on the TABE. If the test scores qualify the student for the online program, he or she will be assigned a teacher and placed in the appropriate classes.

The teacher monitors the student's online work and is available to the student by both e-mail and telephone. There is a three hour minimum weekly work requirement to remain in the program but no maximum to the number of hours a student may work in any given week. Many of our online students put in substantially more than three hours a week in an effort to learn more quickly and be eligible to take the GED or retake the TABE sooner.

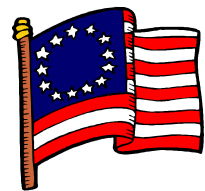
My Skills Tutor has lessons in reading, math computation, applied math and language. Students who have tested under the ninth grade level in any of these categories are initially placed in My Skills Tutor to work on the applicable subjects. The class work can be supplemented by online workshops that are available to all of our students. Students in the My Skills Tutor program are periodically retested on the TABE and become eligible to enter the GED Online course when they have tested at the high school level in all subjects. The GED Online course covers all of the subjects that are tested on the GED. The quizzes at the end of the GED Online course lessons are worded much like they would be in the questions on the GED so this course is an excellent preparation for taking the GED.

The first question that many students entering the online program ask is how long it will take before they are ready to take the GED or become eligible to enter a course at the Charlotte Technical Center. There is no set answer to this question. It depends on the student, how much time he or she can spend in the program, the student's level when he or she starts the program and how quickly he or she learns and retains the course material.

If you are interested in learning more about the online learning program, talk to a teacher at the Adult Learning Center at the Mall.

DAR SUPPORTS ADULT LEARNING CENTER

A big thanks goes out to the Charlotte Bay Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (the "DAR") for its support of the Adult Learning Center. The DAR held a fundraiser at the Port Charlotte Books-A-Million and raised over \$200. The DAR's contribution was used to purchase workbooks to help our adult basic education students work on their language and math skills.



MEET VOLUNTEER TUTOR STEPHEN CROUCH

Last November, instructor Lynne Kinnear looked up from her work to find a gentleman with a strong southern accent asking whether he could help out in any way. Lynne immediately put Steve Crouch to work as a tutor at our Gibraltar Street location and he has become a fixture there. Steve is a “serial tutor,” working with seven or eight students over the course of any given week. When asked about his schedule at the Center, Steve said that he is there “Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings, and sometimes on Thursday nights.” With his background working as a pressman for newspapers and commercial printing companies, Steve has an almost engrained appreciation for reading and loves to help his students work on their literacy skills. He works primarily with students in our ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) program, helping them develop their proficiency in speaking, reading, and understanding English. Steve enjoys the challenge of figuring out a way to explain words to his students. How, for instance, do you explain what a “bucket” is? Creativity is definitely required, and he often finds himself drawing pictures or acting words out like in a game of charades. Although Steve always has a plan in mind for his tutoring sessions, his students sometimes take him in a different direction, asking about idioms or vocabulary or just talking with him about their life experiences. Steve goes with the flow, realizing that it is all part of the process. When asked about Steve, Lynne said, “We are seeing a great leap in the progress our students who are working with Steve are making. We are deeply grateful for his time and efforts, as are his students.” Thanks, Steve, for being a volunteer tutor.



Tutors Debbie Locascio and Steve Crouch at our Meet and Greet

INSTRUCTOR DUSTY MAINO *(Continued from page 1)*

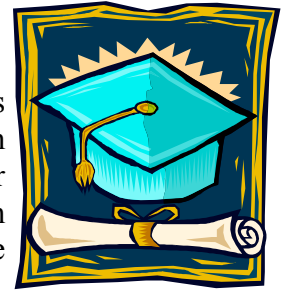
in Humanities. Those credits were transferred to Montclair State University (NJ) and another four years (part-time) were spent working on a BA in English and a Teacher Certification in Secondary English Education. When she finally graduated, she and her husband were homeowners and the proud parents of an 8-year-old and a 2-year-old. Any stigma associated with having dropped out of high school became a thing of the past. Few of her peers know this story, but many of her students do. Age is not a factor; determination is.

In the early days of her “career” in the adult literacy field, Dusty Maino was a classroom tutor with the Even Start program. Later she tutored students on an individual basis. In November 2004, Dusty interviewed for a position in the learning lab and has been there ever since. She likes the program because each student can work at his or her own pace. Students are not “held back or left in the dust” as can happen in a structured classroom situation. However, don’t think you can sleep on the job on her watch because Dusty roams the room continually to make sure students understand what they are working on and making progress. She says she can tell who needs a bit of help by the way they hold their pencils – “If the pencil is not moving, the student is not ‘getting it.’ Our instructors’ number one job is one-on-one help for all.”

Dusty always attends the GED graduation ceremony at the Charlotte Technical Center when the learning lab has graduates. Her message to these grads: “Receiving your GED is proof that you have the courage and the drive to succeed. Your education is something no one can take away from you. No matter what career or interest you pursue, your education will refine your abilities and define your character.” Dusty is the greatest cheerleader that our students could have, and we are fortunate to have her on our staff. Thanks, Dusty, for your dedication, hard work, and constant enthusiasm!

EYES ON THE GED PRIZE *(Continued from page 1)*

first started her studies. The last time that she had been in a school environment was when she was in the seventh grade, and she wondered if she could still learn and retain information. She quickly discovered that you never lose the ability to learn. Her goal was to spend three hours each day in the learning lab on her studies. Her math scores rapidly improved, and she moved on to improving her reading and language skills.



Her goal is to get her GED and find a job doing medical billing and decoding. After years of working on her feet, the idea of working at a desk is very appealing! Instructor Dusty Maino sees the hard work that Tasha has been putting in and has this to say about our student: “Tasha is relentless. She reviews her *math* morning, noon and night. She will not be defeated by that measly four-letter word.”

Tasha recently accompanied Leslie Isley to her presentation to the United Way of Charlotte County about the work the Center is doing. Tasha told the group about her experience at the Center and how important it is to her to get her education. Tasha also has some words of advice and encouragement for our students, particularly the older population. She says, “Never give up! School is our future. Even if you are 80, it never hurts to learn.” With an attitude like that, we know that Tasha will achieve her goals.

THANKS TO ALL OF OUR TUTORS!

The staff and students of the Adult Learning Center would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our volunteer tutors. You are making a difference in our students’ lives.

“Teachers open the door. You enter by yourself.” — Chinese proverb

“Literacy is the most basic currency of the knowledge economy we live in today.” — President Obama

ADULT LEARNING CENTER LOCATIONS

E-mail: Leslie_Isley@ccps.k12.fl.us

Port Charlotte Town Center Mall
1441 Tamiami Trail, Suite 365
Port Charlotte, Florida 33948
Phone: 941-255-7555

Family Services Center
21450 Gibraltar Street
Port Charlotte, Florida 33952
Phone: 941-255-1431

Charlotte Technical Center
18150 Murdock Circle
Port Charlotte, Florida 33948
Phone: 941-255-7500

Stop by and find out what we’re all about!