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Colchester Adult Learning Association continues to learn and grow after 30 years

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Colchester Adult Learning Association (CACL) executive director Mary Teed (left) is joined by Truro Mayor Bill Mills, CACL board chair Ellen Marshall and former board chair Keltie Jones for a photo following the 30th-anniversary celebration last week. Teed, Mills and Jones spoke at the event while Marshall took on the role of emcee. Richard MacKenzie

TRURO, N.S. — It was a celebration three decades in the making as Colchester Adult Learning Association (CALA) personnel gathered with friends, partners, and supporters at the Inn on Prince June 12 to recognize the milestone of reaching 30 years of operation.

The organization, a not-for-profit Community Learning Organization (CLO) “dedicated to providing opportunities for all adults to pursue their learning goals,” was incorporated in 1993 through the effort of volunteers developing the Colchester Literacy Coalition.

“Thirty years in the community, and I think the most important thing you heard tonight is they’re constantly learning and growing, just like their learners are,” Keltie Jones, former board chair of CALA and current associate vice-president of student experience at Mount St. Vincent University, said in an interview following the event.

“It’s lifelong learning for the organization too. They look at what is happening in the community, access what the needs are in the community, and focus on

building the basic skills for a person to be successful,” Jones, one of the event’s guest speakers, said.



Pictured after the 30th-anniversary celebration is Colchester Adult Learning Association (CALA) staff Sarah Thornham (left), Mary Teed, Courtney Crowe, Vangie Beal, Terri Minho, Tara Firth, and David Boehm. Richard MacKenzie - Richard MacKenzie

She talked more about CALA’s staff, led by executive director Mary Teed, responding to the needs they recognize in the community.

“Again, they’re constantly asking what are the needs right now and how can we adjust to meet those needs. That has been CALA’s strength, and Mary has been a huge part of that because she has been very adaptable and proactive in figuring out ways to do things a little bit differently if need be.”

Jones noted the passion Teed brings to her role and how it envelops those around her.

“You have to have that kind of passion, and it’s contagious; her passion ensures the staff and organization feel supported and excited about what they’re doing, and that gets translated,” Jones said. “Learning is exciting. Being able to develop new skills that help you navigate the world better is an exciting thing. I think, sometimes, people feel, when they don’t have those skills, intimidated and they are afraid to come forward and ask for that help, but the way CALA has been packaging their program is so inviting and topical – people look at it and go, ‘oh, that is interesting.’ Then the staff gets them excited about learning, which leads to learning more and growing in other areas too.”

Teed and Truro Mayor Bill Mills also spoke during the event and enlightened the audience as to their respective twisted roads through their education journeys.



Young Stephen Arsenault, the grandson of executive director Mary Teed, performed the land acknowledgement announcement to begin the official portion of last week's Colchester Adult Learning Association (CALA) 30th-anniversary celebration. Richard MacKenzie - Richard MacKenzie

“Life took me on a different path,” Teed said, referring to her start-and-stop high school days, which never ended in a graduation ceremony.

“So, I wrote my GED, headed off NSCC, and then university and found my way here to CALA, where I relate to the learners who struggled to get back to learning and making their dreams come true,” she said.

Teed said the evening provided a great opportunity for “partners, supporters, learners, and funders to meet and mingle with each other and learn more about the many aspects of CALA.

“Success, whatever that means to you, starts with one small step; this was the message we heard repeatedly throughout the evening,” Teed added. “Many past and present learners were in attendance and all seemingly agreed that taking the first step can lead you anywhere. My grandson Stephen also took a step towards his success (this evening) by addressing the group and giving a heartfelt land acknowledgment.”

For more information on CALA, visit its website at www.gocala.ca or its Facebook page.