

News Release

December 13, 2010

Project Literacy Kelowna Society sounds alarm

The crowd attending the annual general meeting of Project Literacy Kelowna Society was shocked to learn the non-profit society is fighting for survival.

At the Dec. 2 AGM in the downtown library, Executive Director Barb Hagan did not candy-coat the financial position of the non-profit society.

“We are in jeopardy of closing our doors if our financial position doesn’t improve soon,” Hagan told the crowd. “Our sources of income are shrinking or vanishing and we have not yet found sufficient replacement funding to close the gap.”

Project Literacy Kelowna Society will celebrate its 25th anniversary in October, if it survives that long.

“We have enjoyed tremendous support from the community and awareness of our service is at an all-time high,” says Hagan. “Unfortunately, the funding is not going in the same direction.”

Like most other non-profit societies, PLKS relies on Gaming Funds from the provincial government. The funding was reduced by 50 per cent this year and under new rules PLKS cannot apply for Gaming funds again until November 2011.

“To take \$60,000 in funds away from an organization where every penny is accounted for and is crucial to keep up with the demand in the community... well, it’s not easy to replace that kind of money,” said board president Tom Wilson.

Project Literacy Kelowna provides one-on-one tutoring to people who need essential literacy or numeracy training. PLKS’s 150-plus tutors all volunteer their time, which amounted to 80,000 hours in 2010 – an equivalent wage value of \$2 million to our community.

Project Literacy Kelowna provided literacy training to 640 people in 2010. Hagan is the society’s only full-time employee, while two part-time staff assess learners for their literacy needs, train tutors and match learners with an appropriate tutor.

“These learners are trying to improve their lives by obtaining this absolutely vital skill,” says Wilson. “Project Literacy gives them the hand up they need to open up job opportunities and gain stability for themselves and their families.”

Hagan says the bond between tutors and adult learners is often essential to the overall learning process, because the learner is more comfortable and confident one-on-one with a tutor than they are in a classroom setting.

“We have so many touching stories of people who have turned their lives around, just by earning their high school equivalency, or receiving help to pass that math test that gets them into a vocational program,” says Hagan.

After the AGM, the board of directors of Project Literacy Kelowna agreed it was time to alert the community to the society's financial situation.

"We were open about our situation with the people who attended our annual general meeting, and we think the wider community needs to know how serious this is," said Wilson. "We need donations, third-party fundraising efforts or corporate partnerships to get us through this period until the province returns gaming revenues to fund charities and community non-profits as was promised when Gaming was expanded throughout B.C."

To make a donation, or to partner with Project Literacy Kelowna on a fundraising event, contact Barb Hagan at 762-2163.

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