Dr. Barry Shaffer, MN Director of Adult Ed

Dr. Barry Shaffer is passionate about his work and about Adult Education in Minnesota. That became clear to me as I sat down with him to converse about his job and about Minnesota's Adult Education programs.

Dr. Shaffer prizes the "positive climate" in Adult Education in Minnesota. He spoke warmly about the close interaction with teachers and program managers in the field, valuing the sense that his department is an integral part of the delivery service in Adult Education around the state. He commented that he takes personal pride in keeping up with emails and phone messages in order to stay in touch with the various programs.

His own department, under his leadership, has been a model for interagency collaboration, working closely with such entities as Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU), Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) with its MFIP program, and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). He encourages local programs to also connect with MFIP providers, Workforce programs, colleges and training programs, etc.

Barry's first job offer following his Master's degree graduation from the University of South Alabama was as a Desegregation Specialist for Alabama schools, a position he held for three years before returning to school to earn his doctorate in Educational Administration from the University of Colorado. His promotion to State Director of Adult Education in Minnesota in 1998 followed twenty years in the Minnesota Department of Education, seven of which were in the Department of Adult Education itself.

Minnesota's Adult Education had a modest beginning, primarily in the 1960s. Programming was sporadic, and resources were sparse. Only some school districts offered services to adults. There were also small community-based organizations teaching literacy - without funding. As Federal funding for such efforts began to be allocated, there was a move to create partnerships and collaborations among school districts and these community agencies, and eventually all districts were mandated to provide services.

Adult Education in Minnesota has grown dramatically under Dr. Shaffer's leadership. There has been a 400% growth in resources in his ten years in the post; he currently oversees a budget of over $50 million. He manages a professional staff of eight Adult Education specialists, double that of 1998, when he began. Dr. Shaffer credits the level of legislative advocacy, much of this done capably by Literacy MN, as largely responsible for this great increase. An increase in revenue means increase in services to meet the immense need.

As for challenges, Dr. Shaffer spoke about the struggle to implement a statewide accountability system, wherein programs are given an annual report card. At first, it was difficult for many program leaders to make the changes in record-keeping, consistent pre- and post-testing, and capturing the learners' gains in core performance indicators set out by the Federal government. But the transition has been made quite successfully, and programs have largely adjusted to new ways of being accountable and are able to more effectively showcase their successes.

In his very first meeting as newly-promoted State Director of Adult Education, Dr. Shaffer was asked, "What is your vision for Adult Education?" Since that time, he has engaged in "planful visioning" through respectful listening to those in the field. The vision for Adult Education is informed directly by those working day-to-day with the programs and people served.

Dr. Shaffer cited several trends as the future of Adult Education over the next few years: increased emphasis on career pathways or pre-career training, greater electronic delivery, and stronger programming towards post-secondary transitions, such that not only will adult students enter college or further training, but that they will be successful, as well.

Leading a department that is respected and viewed as helpful to the program's constituents is gratifying to Dr. Shaffer. He has been touched over and over again by the stories of triumph and struggle of the adult learners who graduate from the various programs. If redesigning the Adult Education programs from scratch, he said he'd do it the same way; there is such significant impact on the lives of those who participate. He summed up: "It's nice to be part of a life-changing endeavor." ~Li Nordell
Thoughts from Tom

by Tom Olson, Assistant Director for Community Education, Adult Learning Programs

As many of you already know, I have submitted my retirement notice to Saint Paul Public Schools. It will be effective at the end of February, 2009. I hope that I enjoy the remaining months as much as I have my entire career.

I want to express my gratitude for the opportunities that I have had to serve Saint Paul Public Schools Adult Learning and Community Education programs, and the communities and diverse citizens of Saint Paul. I sincerely hope that I have left the world a little better place as a result of my work.

Nothing comes easily. Innovation and risk-taking come with a price. So does taking the responsibility of leadership. But the rewards for any small part I may have played in the success of any of these activities has been worth every challenge.

I began my career with SPPS as a part of the Community Programs section, beginning in January, 1976. My two assignments as a Community Education Coordinator were in the Midway/Frogtown and Como areas. The community organization and educational leadership aspects in that role gave me great personal and professional satisfaction. It is not often that a person gets to participate in grassroots community organization, building new programs, supporting children and families, and helping immigrants and refugees build new lives in a cold northern climate.

I have spent the last half of my career at the Hubbs Center. I joined the Adult Learning Program section as the center opened in the summer of 1994, working with collaborations and outreach programs. I have great affection for the many roles I have played in the evolution of the Hubbs Center and the program we have created. It comes from the work of so many and the result of effort over time.

Each and every day, I am proud of the quality of effort that goes into instruction. It is the reason for the quality reputation of our program. I admire the dedication of our learners as they overcome their challenges and prepare themselves for their futures. I am thankful for each of our partners as we try to solve problems with our collaborative resources. We have a wonderful situation and a wonderful future because of who we are and what we bring to our learning community each day.

Thank you all for your effort. Thanks to each of you for getting up each day and trying to make the world a little better place. I am honored to share in your concern for others.

Program/Staff News

Hubbs Teacher Marks Milestone

This summer I celebrated 50 years as a School Sister of Notre Dame. The SSND's began in Germany 175 years ago by Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger in order to educate and liberate poor girls. There are about 4,000 awesome SSND's serving in the world. We respond to the urgent needs of the world as educators, social workers, nurses, lawyers, pastoral ministers, artists, spiritual directors, counselors and missionaries. Love is the center of our lives. We live a simple life, sharing all in community. Our life of prayer nourishes us to be in solidarity with all citizens of the world.

There have been many changes in my life as a sister these 50 years -- changes of dress, housing, and places I go to be about the mission of Jesus. I have spent almost 50 years as a teacher in Minnesota, Iowa, and Kenya. Since 1980 I have taught adult refugees and immigrants at International Institute, Notre Dame E.S.L. School in St. Paul Companies, Jewish Community Center, McDonough and Mt. Airy projects and the Hubbs Center. In 1986 I was a member of the state delegation to six refugee camps in Thailand. This visit and my five years in Kenya were life-changing events for me. Visiting prisoners is also a ministry dear to my heart.

I grew up in Frog Town and feel honored to be back in the neighborhood helping newcomers at Hubbs Center. My students have gifted me with their stories, laughter, trust, generosity and love.

My favorite pass-time is dancing. I have been an avid square dancer for the last 20 years. I’ve danced at the State Fair, in nursing homes and on floats in many parades.

Mary Oliver said, "I don't want to end up simply having visited this world."

I add: I want to leave my footprints where I have danced.

Please join in celebrating my 50th jubilee year with me by surprising someone with an act of generous love. ~Sister Rosemary Schuneman

Introducing Batool Zahedi-Jasbi, Hubbs Math Teacher

Batool Zahedi-Jasbi has been a math teacher at the Hubbs Center about five years. She holds a K-12 license, an ABE license, and has completed all the coursework for her PhD in Math Education.

While math is her area of academic expertise (algebra being her favorite math subject), she is a woman of many passions: Creativity finds expression in Batool’s life in her interests in knitting, crocheting, making jewelry, cooking, baking, sewing, and food decoration. She also loves the Iranian celebration of Nowrooz (New Year) with the first day of spring.

Batool grew up and married in Teheran, Iran. She was the last of her parents’ eight children, many of whom, like Batool...
A Look at the Future of Adult Education in an Age of Technology

Currently in the US, 41% of homes have Broadband, 75% have mobile phones. Forty-five percent of those under age 25, 25% of those ages 26-43, and 17% of those 44-62 have data phones. Ninety-one percent use a search engine at least once a week. Younger people are playing games, sending IM - all activities that involve minimal reading. Students are spending less time reading print material and more time on the Internet.

What might all this mean for teaching reading and other subjects in the digital age?

An article in New York Times about the future of reading (“Literacy Debate: Online, R U Really Reading?” by Motoko Rich, published: July 27, 2008) addresses digital reading versus print reading. There are two camps: Some lament the time young people spend on the internet - they assert reading on the Internet diminishes literacy. They won't develop the necessary cognitive skills and comprehension skills involved in being a good reader. It encourages a short attention span. They don't like to read huge amounts of text. They are more comfortable in image-rich environments than with text.

The author states, "Reading in print and reading on the Internet are different. On paper, text has a predetermined beginning, middle and end, where readers focus for a sustained period on one author's vision. On the Internet, readers skate through cyberspace at will and, in effect, compose their own beginnings, middle, and ends."

Others believe that the Internet has created a new kind of reading that we should not discount. Googleing, etc., entails some engagement with text. Online reading skills will help learners fare better when they begin looking for digital-age jobs.

The article points out that surveys say that students do NOT want all technology - they want interactive learning. They want a blended version of technology and face-to-face. We have found this to be true with Mindquest Academy. What's needed is High Tech and High Touch!

Knowing this, how might instruction be delivered in 2015 after 50 years of Adult Education in Saint Paul? We can't ignore the many skills that new technology has enhanced which have profound implications for learning. These implications raise questions such as these:

- How can technology best help language learning?
- How do we design instruction for students who are sitting in the classroom IM?
- How are today's learners different past learners and from the teachers who teach them?
- If social networking is very important, how do we build it into technology and other instruction in pedagogically sound ways?
- If students prefer and are engaged more with an image-rich environment than with text, what does that mean for designing instruction?
- How do we best do "high tech and high touch"?
- Do we adjust to their style or do we mold how they learn?
- The uses of IT are driven by pedagogy, not technology, so how do I balance that?
- How can we best deliver anytime anywhere instruction?
- Is industry looking for different certifications than academic institutions are in the habit of providing?

I will leave this challenge to you to consider. One thing I know, however: There are four elements that worked in 1965, work now in 2008, and that wisdom says will continue to work on into the future. These are collaboration, relationship-building, empowerment, and continuous improvement. Let's not forget about these important foundation stones in this technological age.

~chart and text adapted from a speech given by Bella Hanson to the Hubbs Center staff on August 25, 2008

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Building and Program News

Building Capacity in Response to a Changing Minnesota

In a recent presentation to a statewide group of Adult Basic Education (ABE) practitioners, state demographer, Tom Gillaspy, laid out the situation for the coming years. Minnesota continues to rank highly in many social and economic indicators, but past performance does not ensure future results. Our state is changing in fundamental ways. We are now under-performing against national averages in areas like personal income growth and Gross Domestic Product growth. Diversity within our population continues to increase dramatically, as migration to fill jobs represents the largest percent of new workers. In fact, a sizable wave of retirement among baby boomers is just beginning. In a nutshell, we face a situation where there will be a shortage of replacement workers for those retiring and a shortage of workers for economic growth or expansion.

This situation falls within a national context of growing awareness of an impending crisis. A June 2008 report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy (NCAL) stated that:

...the competitiveness of our workforce at all levels has significantly declined, threatening our standard of living and way of life. It is time to act. It is widely known that a vast number of adults need educational services to be ready for the college and the job training that our global economy requires. But our adult education and workforce skills development programs, designed for a different reality, are not meeting the needs of America's citizens or its workers.

With reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act still pending, a series of NCAL actions and recommendations are also slated to be proposed as a bill that may or may not be signed into law by the next president.

The most important contribution of ABE to our economy is to improve the productivity of our workforce through programs that provide necessary knowledge, skills, and training for workers to get better jobs or to retool their careers. Saint Paul Adult Learning continues to be a leader in developing capacity-building initiatives in our field to meet the challenges that we currently face. Here are three of them:

We have actively implemented strategies to improve accountability including utilizing and developing a new database, strengthening accountability processes organization-wide, and making better decisions based on data. As a result, St. Paul Adult Learning met all of the National Reporting System (NRS) standardized testing targets set for us by the state and federal government for 2007-2008.

(Continued from previous column)

Our program was also awarded a grant to develop and market a series of "stackable credentials" for ABE students statewide. The coursework and training necessary to obtain these credentials would provide adults with academic and work readiness skills to further their education at the post-secondary level or to compete for jobs in the workplace.

For an overview of our extensive work to integrate technology with adult learning, see Adam Kieffer's article, page 5. ~Jennifer Weaverling

Get Ready for College!

The Hubbs Center is rapidly expanding classes and programs to help adult learners get ready for college. Many adult learners do not realize that if they aren't ready for college, they end up paying for "developmental" classes at college, which usually are noncredit classes. Learners end up in these classes because they have low scores on the Accuplacer test, which community colleges use for course placement.

For most learners, a better alternative is to get ready by taking free classes at an adult education site like the Hubbs Center.

This past summer, several learners who registered at Saint Paul College took Accuplacer preparation classes from Hubbs Center teachers. The results are as follows:

"14 students scored high enough to eliminate one college class in reading
"10 students scored high enough to eliminate one college class in math
"14 students scored high enough to eliminate one college class in sentence skills

At about $400 for a 3-credit class, the Hubbs Center classes saved learners a total of over $11,000 in college expenses.

This fall the Hubbs Center is offering more College Prep and Accuplacer Prep classes than ever before. Learners who take an Accuplacer class at Hubbs will have an opportunity to take the Accuplacer test here at Hubbs, again through Century College, for free. A new Math Test Prep also prepares learners for either the Accuplacer test or the GED math test. Many other higher level courses, such as Algebra or Intro to Word Processing, are good preparation for college. Learners who have a TABE score of 7.0 and higher should discuss these options with advisors or teachers during scheduling time. ~Claudia Bredemus

~Jennifer Weaverling

(Continued at the top of the next column)
Pre-Job Training Classes at Hubbs Center
St. Paul Adult Learning continues to expand its job training classes. This fall five classes are being offered:
- Introduction to Nursing Assistant
- Introduction to Child Development
- Low Pressure Boiler License
- Commercial Driver’s License Permit
- ServSafe - Certified Food Manager License

Our commitment is to prepare learners for success in transitions from adult basic education into work that can become a positive career. For further information, contact the Hubbs Center at 651-290-4822. –Elizabeth Andress

Technology at Hubbs
It’s an exciting time at the Hubbs Center for technology. During the 07/08 school year the McKnight Foundation awarded the Hubbs Center with a grant for increasing the capacity and availability of technology, tech literacy and laying the foundation for distance learning for adult learners across the greater St. Paul community.

One of the goals of the grant is to develop technologically competent teaching staff who can organically integrate software, computer and internet skills into class content with the result that learners will be better prepared to succeed in the 21st century when being computer and technologically literate are necessary skills for success in the workforce and society.

The scope of the grant was wide. Some of the highlights are:
1. Laying the framework for piloting and launching of online and distance learning programs, including GED-i, English for All and Lifetime Library
2. Developing and creating a multilingual orientation presentation in which students can individually view and hear information on a computer about intake, orientation, classes, testing, expectations and resources at the Hubbs Center in English and five other languages.
3. Increasing the number of computers available for students and teachers in order to facilitate integration of tech literacy across classes and programs. The number of computers were increased in three previously wired (computer lab) classrooms. Two new wired classrooms were created. Staff and keyboarding lab computers that were outdated were replaced with newer models. Laptops were purchased for teacher and student classroom use. Ceiling-mounted LCD projectors were installed in 18 classrooms. Document cameras, digital video cameras, printers and some computer desks were also purchased.
4. Developing a lending library and checkout system for students to check out materials to aid their self-study outside of the classroom.
5. Providing technology and tech-integration training to teachers

While not all portions of the grant are completed yet, the grant represents a leap towards fulfilling an important part of the original vision of the Hubbs Center as a leader in technology use and tech literacy for lifelong learners in the St. Paul community. –Adam Kieffer

Childcare Help Available
Do you have a friend, family member or neighbor care for your child? Did you know you or your provider may qualify to receive grant money to buy equipment, etc., that can be used for your child? Resources for Child Caring Outreach will be providing staff at Hubbs on Friday mornings, beginning in October, to help you with these and other child-care questions and needs. See them in Room 148A on Friday Mornings.

Workforce Center Help (Monday mornings at Hubbs) Available for Hubbs Students
My name is Marvin Lee, from Saint Paul Workforce Center. I am here to help you search for any job, but more importantly, I will help you to be ready for applying for a job. I will help you make a good resume to save on a floppy disk or flash drive. Employers now always ask for your resume before they will talk to you.

Most assembly and production jobs are full-time. If you are looking for part-time jobs only, those jobs are more likely to be cashier, janitor, housekeeper, dishwasher, and store clerk. You also have to consider your own transportation and the distance to the job you are applying for. Employers require you to be on time for work.

Saint Paul Workforce Center at 540 Fairview Avenue North, Saint Paul, MN 55104 also has classes to help the public learn how to prepare a resume and to search for jobs.

For more information, call 651-642-0363.

My direct phone number is 651-642-0705. At Hubbs, my number is 651-290-4813. Thank you. –Marvin Lee
Learner Voices (Student Writings)

My First Day in America
Hi, it's my pleasure to share with you one of the funniest things that happened to me when I came to America in 2004. At 5:30pm my family and I met a Somali translator at the NY airport, he had some conversation with us and then he told us that we will stay in NY because at that time there is no flight going to MN. Afterwards, he told us we are going to a hotel to sleep at night. He walked with us to show us the hotel and office where we can pick up the key. The hotel was located almost eight blocks away from the airport. Also he told us that tomorrow morning at seven a.m. come to the airport, then he left.

We got into the rooms and we took a shower, and after 20 minutes the waiter brought us dinner. After having dinner everybody went to bed before me because I was last one who took a shower, the room has only two small beds and we were five females, so I didn't get space to sleep. I decided to sit in a chair and just watch a TV. Somehow I got to sleep and I had a nightmare. I thought that someone knocked on our door and said, “Hey guys you are going to miss the flight. Hurry up.” Anyway, I got up and I said “Everyone get up let’s hurry.” We want to the front desk to return the key.

When we got outside it was too dark and nobody was walking around us. When we got to the airport they asked us what time do we have the flight, we said at 7am. They looked at us and said, “Why do you came at this time?” We said we were sorry we know we are late. Then they said to us you are 6 hours early and they pointed the clock which was in front of us. We looked at the clock and we glanced at our watch and then we realized that our watch tells the time in Africa not in America, also we mentioned that the knocking on the door was not reality. Then we went back to our hotel, while everybody was angry.

Finally, my advice to you is sometimes when you think something is true it may be a nightmare, so don’t believe what you see in the nightmare. And I am thankful at first for God who helped me to write this story, than my great and respectful teacher Mrs. Marilyn Gjerde who encouraged me to write something that I didn’t expect to write easily, and lastly to every one who reads my true story.
~Sahra Abdi

Learning English
My name is Fadumo Aden. I am from Somalia. I want to learn English because it is very important since I live in America. I want to learn to read, write and understand people in English. When I was in Somalia I didn’t know English. I was not going to school in my country, because when I was five years old a civil war broke out. Therefore, I didn’t have a chance to school in my country. I went to a private school in my language, Somali. Then I came to the United States in 2004. When I came to America I started high school. I dropped out in 2005 because I lived by myself. I didn’t have anybody to help me; therefore, I had to find a job. I worked at Jenny O in Pelican Rapids for two years. Then I returned to St. Paul and high school. When I aged out, I started studying English at the Hubbs Center on 08/05/008. I plan to get a GED and then go to college.

I like English very much. I hope my English will improve a lot, while studying at the Hubbs Center. ~Fadumo Aden

My Dreams
‘Hello,’ everybody. My name is Yulma. I am from the beautiful state of Nayarit in Mexico.

I came to the United States in 1992. I went to junior high school in L.A. I finished junior high school after I moved to Washington. I went to high school for 2 years, but I didn’t finish because I started working.

This affected my life in many ways. But the most important thing is that I’m here to learn English and I am now working to complete my GED. I am preparing to go to college. I would like to be an interpreter for a part-time job to help others, because one of the biggest ways that I could help them is to help them communicate. I would like to be a policewoman for my full time job. These are some of my dreams.

I would like to say thank you to the Hubbs Center to give me the opportunity to study English and thanks to my good teacher Marilyn Gjerde. ~Yulma Suarez

To Become a Father
Last September, my wife told me I am going to be a father. I was so happy, I put my arm around her and thanked her.

This past June, when she started to have pains, I rushed her to the Hospital. I waited for one hour by my wife’s side, holding her hand. Suddenly, I heard a baby’s cry. It was a baby girl. She’s tiny and so beautiful. My wife and I had tears seeing our baby. It was so wonderful becoming a father. ~Seo Sien Lou

I Must Keep Strong
I am a mother of 4 boys. I am so worried about them. I have kids and I go to school. My life is stressful and difficult, but I don’t care. I must keep going. I have many kids, but I feel strongly about learning English myself. Studying English is very hard for me, but I try because I want to be a good role model for my kids and teach them to be nice with other people. Now my kids are very young. For now, I just want them to be healthy and warm while I am at the Hubbs Center studying English. ~Lou Vang
Hubbs Family Scholarships

Three former learners were recently honored at a reception at the Hubbs Center for winning the Hubbs Family Scholarship, made possible through a fund set up by the Ronald M. Hubbs family specifically to help Hubbs learners go on to post-secondary education. The scholarship amount is $1000 for each recipient. Mrs. Ronald Hubbs (Margaret) and her grandson Jamie Hubbs attended the reception to personally meet the awardees.

Tavarra Thomas is attending Saint Paul College, and Diana Galaviz and Theresa O’Connor are both attending The College of Saint Catherine. All three women expressed their profound gratitude to the Hubbs family for helping make it possible for them to follow their dreams through post-secondary education. Congratulations to each of them!

(Note: applications will be available through Hubbs teachers in the spring of 2009.)

My Life in Short

I was born in Asmara, Eritrea. I got married at the end of 2001 but my husband and I didn’t have a very long honeymoon compared with other people in our culture. We had only three months together because he got a Diversity Lottery, and his visa was almost expired. He left me at the beginning of 2002. I stayed with my family for three years.

On March 17, 2005 I went to Kenya. I stayed there for three years until my visa process was completed. At last I joined with my husband on March 12, 2008. I am very happy now.

When I came to America, it was difficult for me because I came from Africa. I found everything different; like language, weather, culture, hard life, busy schedule and the like. But I am doing fine now. I know a little more English, so I can communicate a little more. I can hear and speak English because of my husband. He helps me a lot at home to know everything. He is also teaching me how to drive. The weather is still difficult for me.

If things go according to our plan, I will go to beauty school. I have always had an interest in this field.

Thank you for giving me a chance to express my short life story! —Abeba Tewolde

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and her husband, hold advanced academic degrees. When she and her husband came from Iran to Iowa State University for her husband’s graduate school program, she studied for her BA degree in Math. Following their graduations, they returned to Iran, where she taught high school math.

They had two more opportunities to live in the US and in Canada before settling down in Minnesota permanently. (Batool is now a US citizen.) They made the decision to stay in the US for the sake of their three daughters, so they could pursue their schooling here. One daughter has her BA in Architecture and a Master’s degree in Mathematics Education, currently teaching math in high school; one is a PhD student in Electrical Engineering; the youngest one is studying Philosophy in Boston right now.

When asked what she likes best about her career, she spoke about her joy in seeing the positive changes in her students’ lives—students who get better jobs, a raise at work, who grow in confidence, or students who progress well in math.

We’re glad you’re here, Batool! Thank you for your work!

—Li Nordell
As a retired Special Education teacher, focusing in Speech Therapy, Patricia DeFrancis has a love for working with individuals. Ms. DeFrancis started teaching in 1961, and taught in Michigan, Ohio, Colorado and Minnesota. When she retired in 2000, Patricia decided that since she had worked with young learners most of her life, she wanted the chance to work with adult learners. She then found out about the Hubbs Center while participating in a training through the Minnesota Literacy Council. Since then, Ms. DeFrancis has been volunteering at the Center for five years. During those years, she has worked one on one with special needs students, helped in the classroom and study lab, and has been a strong advocate for the students she tutors. Patricia has been working with students and advocating for them all of her life. She first became an advocate while growing up in New York with her Sicilian family. Her father inspired her passion for advocacy with the work he accomplished in the child protection services field while she was growing up. Ms. DeFrancis finds this experience to be fun and extremely rewarding. She loves getting to know all the different students from many cultures and hearing their amazing life stories. Patricia believes that anyone who volunteers at the Hubbs Center will leave their volunteer experience truly enriched by the students and staff. ~Heather Partridge, volunteer 07-08