

Grimsby Public Library teaches adults to use new technology

The Grimsby Public Library in Grimsby, Ontario ran a weekly drop-in program focused on helping adults with their digital literacy skills. While there was a bit of interest from a few of the locals, the program was sporadic, and librarian Ryan Waldron thought it could be improved.

Searching for a digital literacy program

When a colleague forwarded him an email about a free digital literacy program called *Youth Teaching Adults*, he thought it sounded like the perfect way to improve the existing programming.

Youth Teaching Adults pairs youth volunteer-tutors with adult learners who want to learn about new technology – whether it be using email on a computer, connecting to WIFI on a cell phone or having a video chat on a tablet.

Free resources, training and lesson plans

“What I liked about the program was that it provided us with resources like how to successfully run a digital literacy workshop and lesson plans on various topics, like social media or email,” said Ryan. “The way the workshops were set up was much better than how we were doing it in the past, and allowed us to offer programming on a more regular basis.”

The Grimsby Public Library ran two series of workshops – one in the fall and one in the winter – each for three straight weeks. The workshops were so popular that they added two additional workshops to the winter program series.

“Running the workshops after Christmas was extremely successful because a lot of people received new devices and wanted to know how to use them,” said Ryan.

The program received positive feedback from the adult learners due to the one-on-one nature of the workshops. Since each adult learner was paired with a youth volunteer-tutor, lessons were tailored to the specific questions that the learners had.

Ryan says it was easy for them to recruit volunteers as the library regularly recruits student volunteers for various programming. Additionally, they relied on teenage employees to step in if needed, which many of them were happy to do.

“I was really impressed by how much the volunteers knew about technology, but I guess most of them have grown up on it,” he says. “The volunteer training provided by the *Youth Teaching Adults* program was really good because it makes the volunteers think about the learner and what may be a stumbling block for them. It really is a great leadership opportunity for them.”

The Grimsby Public Library plans to run additional *Youth Teaching Adults* workshops thanks to its popularity.

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“People really appreciate this unique and free service because I think that oftentimes, family members can get frustrated with each other when it comes to teaching and learning about technology. But with *Youth Teaching Adults*, the tutors are there specifically for the learners, providing them with a safe and comfortable environment where they can ask whatever questions they want.”

*Ryan Waldron,
Librarian,
Grimsby Public Library*

To learn more about *Youth Teaching Adults* or to sign up to host a free workshop, visit YouthTeachingAdults.ca