

Literacy Changes Lives

Nancy Kelly

The sun sat lazily in the morning sky, beaming its proud, gorgeous rays upon my face, as I slowly and deliberately sipped my morning cup of energy. There is something so serene and beautiful about the morning. It makes me feel introspective and insightful. As I sat there quietly basking in the morning glow, a thought nagged me as it has done for many years. I wanted my high school diploma.

I am still not sure what inspired me on that particular day, but for some reason it really hit me, and I became increasingly frustrated with myself for not having it.

With that thought, an overwhelming surge of guilt began to well up inside of me. I had been dishonest with my children for so many years, telling them that I had finished school in a desire to keep them in school. I had lied. Although my intentions were good, and they worked, I felt like a hypocrite for telling my children to do what I had not done.

As children in our home, education took a backseat to the pacification of my father, a violent and abusive alcoholic. Neither of my parents placed a high value on education. We attended school only because it was required by law for us to do so. Nonetheless, I enjoyed learning. Reading and writing became an escape for me. I could disappear behind the pages of a great novel, imagining myself there. The words on the pages in front of me embraced me and comforted me when I had nothing else.

At 18, I left home with my education incomplete. I somehow made my way through the world, always sidestepping the fact that I did not have that elusive piece of paper. That piece of paper that said, "I did it. I matter. I can change the world."

Education does matter, not just from an academic perspective, but for much more personal reasons. Education brings opportunity; it brings freedom, tolerance and understanding. Education incites change. I want to be part of that change.

With my high school diploma proudly in hand, I plan to further my education by attending a post-secondary institution to become a teacher. I further plan to someday travel overseas to teach the eloquent English language to others, so that they may become empowered and free from the bonds of illiteracy. My personal belief is that we can all change the world, one person at a time. Having a voice is so necessary to do that.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to climb my mountain, to grow and to learn from the wonderful teachers in the Adult Learning Program, and to help make the world a better place, for my children, for their children, for everyone.

Every student that has ever held that precious piece of paper in their hand will proudly agree that literacy does change lives.

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