

Students essays published; grant presented

(Bradenton, FL—May 10, 2010) How many people can say they've been published? Thanks to the Florida Literacy Coalition, three Manatee Technical Institute adult education students can say they are. Their two essays and one poem are now published in *My Way, a Collection of Essays and Poems by Florida's Adult Learners*.

One of the students, Gwenda Gibson, had the opportunity to read her essay to the attendees of the 2010 Florida Literacy Conference, which took place on Captiva Island, May 5 through 7.

Gibson said that her essay is about striving for survival. She has been writing since she was 15 years old. Gibson is a 25-year-old single mother of three children. "My goal is to go to college to take more classes to help me with my writing," says the aspiring poet and song writer.

When Gibson moved out of a bad neighborhood to a neighborhood closer to MTI, she tried to find work. Unable to do so, she didn't want to do nothing, so she decided to come to school. She walked the 10 city blocks back and forth everyday with determination for the entire first semester.

One of the questions Gibson asks in her essay is why she should make changes in her life. Her answer is "to live life." She writes, "My children need to be happier. My joy needs to be found and not lost. My heart needs completion."

Gibson is at MTI preparing to take the General Education Development (GED) test. Her teacher, Siobhan Awad, says she has improved her language, reading and math scores three to six grade level equivalencies in the seven months she's been in school. Not surprisingly, her writing skills are her highest. Gibson says, "That's my happiness, writing."

To read her essay, go to www.manateetechnicalinstitute.org and click on Essay Winners. Also posted there are the essay and poem of the two other winners, Deidra and Camille Fields, sisters in the adult education program.

Adult education teacher Rob Powers and MTI assistant director Linda Agresta were presenters at the conference. MTI's Health Literacy Initiative grant was one of three that were selected out of 85 in the state to be presented. The grant was awarded by the Florida Literacy Coalition and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida. The \$5,000 grant helped about 200 English as a second language students learn about preventative healthcare. Students from MTI's dental assisting and nursing programs participated, teaching what they had learned in their classes for a unique approach and win-win learning experience for all the students.

Photo: MTI GED student Gwenda Gibson read her winning essay to the Florida Literacy Coalition at their annual conference. Her essay is published in *My Way, a Collection of Essays and Poems by Florida's Adult Learners*.

The mission of Manatee Technical Institute is to meet and exceed our community's training and educational expectations. MTI is a 2007 Tampa Bay Business of the Year and has won more SkillsUSA medals than any other school in the nation for the past six years.

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