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May 10, 2019  
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## **NETWORK 2019 STRENGTHENS, CELEBRATES MASSACHUSETTS' ADULT EDUCATION COMMUNITY**

MARLBOROUGH, MA – At turns informative and inspirational, NETWORK 2019 today brought together over 550 teachers, tutors, counselors, administrators, and advocates to strengthen the practice of adult education in Massachusetts and to celebrate the passion, intelligence, and perseverance of a community so vital to the Commonwealth's future. Hosted each year by the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE), NETWORK is the largest adult education conference in New England.

NETWORK's program of more than 50 workshops, on topics ranging from mobile and distance learning to enhancing writing and communication skills, allowed attendees to exchange new ideas, explore new technologies, and gain valuable first-hand experience putting new methods into action. Interest in NETWORK was so high this year that the conference was sold out.

Dr. Margaret Patterson, Senior Researcher at Research Allies for Lifelong Learning and a presenter at the event, said, "It was an honor to be invited to MCAE's NETWORK Conference to discuss my research on the barriers people face in participating in adult education. The knowledge shared by presenters and among practitioners at NETWORK will benefit adult learners here in Massachusetts – and beyond – for many years to come."

Pesha Black, Director of Holyoke Community College's Ludlow Area Adult Learning Center, commented, "NETWORK is an inspiring day for adult educators to share promising practices and to learn from their peers. Each time I attend, I draw new energy from my colleagues and leave with an array of resources to share with my co-workers and my students."

During the conference's Awards Luncheon, MCAE honored four members of the adult education community for their dedication, leadership, and commitment to improving the lives of the educators and learners around them. The organization recognized Shugri Elmi, a Somali native and now US citizen who attends the Boston Public Schools Adult Learning Center, as its Outstanding Student of 2019 and named Kathleen Klose its Outstanding Educator. Ms. Klose is an ESOL Literacy and Citizenship Teacher at The Immigrant Learning Center in Malden. It also bestowed a Lifetime Achievement award upon Andy Nash, the Director of the New England Literacy Resource Center, in appreciation for her thirty years of service to the field and her tireless advocacy on its behalf. Finally, MCAE presented its annual Ruth E. Derfler Memorial Scholarship to Jeneschya Sanchez, a Haverhill resident who is currently studying psychology and human services at Northern Essex Community College and who completed her adult education courses at Community Action, Inc.

THE VOICE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

In her remarks at the Awards Luncheon, Roberta Soolman, President of the MCAE Board of Directors, hailed the assembled crowd, “We are educators, through and through, and we know that education has always been the strongest way to effect positive, productive, meaningful and generational change and progress.” She reminded all in attendance that “[our] responsibility to educate adults desperately in need of basic skills is a monumental one” and urged them to meet that responsibility “resolutely, despite the challenges and barriers that always have the potential to derail us.” She added, “Today, we should all celebrate the achievements of our award recipients and know that you are an agent of change, bringing hope, joy and opportunity to adults throughout the Commonwealth.”

At present, nearly 19,000 adults are enrolled in state-funded adult education programs in dozens of cities and towns across Massachusetts. They receive instruction in basic literacy and math, learn English, prepare to take their high school equivalency or citizenship examinations, or acquire other skills vital to success in the workplace. Accordingly, adult education represents both an economic lifeline to thousands of families and a critical investment in the Commonwealth’s long-term economic fortunes. Still, another 19,000 adults languish on waiting lists, unable to access the education they need to thrive, the result of a long-term decline in real value of public support for adult education. The budget recently approved by the Massachusetts House of Representatives would help to reverse that trend, bringing funding for adult education to \$38.25 million in the coming year, an increase of nearly 15 percent over current levels. The Massachusetts Senate will soon consider its own spending plan for FY 2020.

Based in Boston, MCAE is statewide membership organization dedicated to championing the right of all adults to acquire the 21st century literacy, English language, and numeracy skills that lead to economic prosperity, strong families, and vibrant communities. Since 1992, MCAE has advanced quality adult basic education in the Commonwealth through professional development opportunities, strategic communications, and sophisticated advocacy. For more about MCAE, visit [www.mcae.net](http://www.mcae.net).

NETWORK 2019 was made possible in part by sponsorships from Dunkin’ and GED Testing Service.