

Passport to Fly

By Nora Elena Bracho and Mireille
Boisvert, Teachers,
Federal Training Centre



Nora Elena Bracho

The Federal Training Centre marked International Literacy Day with activities that generated enthusiasm from both the prison population and staff.

A horseshoe tournament supervised by teacher Jacques Dubé and a petanque tournament led by teacher Jean-Pierre Tremblay brought together 23 participants on the first day of festivities.

The following day, all participants had to register at school for a passport containing instructions for activities in which they could participate: *Marie-Vic* interlinguistic crossword puzzles; *Charivari*, a quiz for teachers; *Mystery Word*, *À l'aide!*, *Logi-Logo*, *Anagram*, *Expression trouée*, *Yorgo's puzzle*, *Richard's Mots sans fotes*, *Who Am I?*, and more.

The passport, containing a monthly calendar, original thoughts and testimonials from inmates attending school, was produced through the cooperation of all the school's teachers and students.

Nicole Kouri, teacher, Émilie Côté, employment counsellor, and two inmates, Marcel Milhomme and Serge Charron, welcomed participants and visitors. These two employees also helped Zoulikha Kouider mark the passports and prepare prizes for participants. Caroline Allen, dietitian, set up a very original literature table on nutrition at the school entrance.

Based on an idea by Jacques Dubé, who was inspired by the poster illustrating this year's theme, all inmates were encouraged to make paper airplanes. A take-off and landing strip helped the plane that cruised the longest distance (29 metres) to victory. The winner, Adrien Miville, became the pilot of

the day. A prize was awarded to the most original airplane.

For three weeks, 13 inmates tried to outsmart each other in order to win the title of champion by decorating their planes, analyzing weather conditions and taking their planes for test flights.

Jean-Pierre Tremblay supervised the scoring with a team of five judges that included a number of outside guests assisted by teacher Gervais Bernier.

Another teacher, Nora Elena Bracho, wrote the lyrics and music to a theme song in three languages and led the choir, accompanied by guitarists Michel Ouellet and Gary Nagy and

a few resident choir members, including Roy Ford, Jacques Kirouac and Sébastien English. She was able to get other teachers and volunteers and even the head of training and employment to sing along in French, English and Spanish, much to everyone's delight.

Through the initiative of two organizers, sweaters sporting the lyrics of the song and pictures of airplanes were given to the day's volunteers, choir members, visitors and winners. Posters on the school's walls bearing pictures and testimonials illustrated the similarity between education and the airplane.

In the afternoon, Marc-André Lachaine, Assistant Director for the Centre de formation continue des Patriotes, a centre for continuing education, and Isabelle Lacasse, manager, graciously handed out Meritas and participation awards in the gym to students and participants in various activities. Marie Victorin College gave caps to the winning pilots and a Meritas Award to the student who had made the most outstanding efforts in college. In his speech, Michel Huard, head of training and education, stressed the importance of education and personal commitment.

To mark the end of the two days of activities, the inmate committee served a victory cake with the colours of International Literacy Day, juice and soft drinks in a gym decorated by Alain Desroches. More than 80 happy participants attended.

We would like to thank all participants for their courage, determination and active contribution throughout the process of organizing this shared project. Through your perseverance and contribution, many were able to get involved and overcome their fear of failure. You turned something ordinary into something special. ■