

Learning Community Director, Sally Derstine

Choosing Contentment. The current state of our economy over the last year has affected everyone in some way. I am encouraged by our members and clients who choose to view any situation they find themselves in as an opportunity rather than a crisis. This is an attitude we bring to our personal and professional lives. Furthermore, I admire those who choose contentment over fear and frustration.

In his book, *The Power of Enough: Finding Contentment By Putting Stuff In Its Place*, Lynn Miller analyzes the barriers to living in contentment that have us tied up in the relentless American pursuit of "more." Miller notes we have created a culture that is in disarray. We have loaded up with goods but are in debt up to our eyeballs, fearful about how we will manage to keep it all together. Despite all of our efforts to "pursue happiness," many of us are anything but happy.

As you reflect and prepare for the New Year, I invite you to consider a few of the questions posed in Miller's book:

- Can you describe who you are in one sentence?
- What does your "stuff" say about you?
- Can you identify the inherent usefulness of the things you own?
- How can you use the economic recession to your advantage?
- How can you get rid of the clutter in your life and decide what is enough?
- At a time when we are searching for just the right "gift", consider the gift that is just right for you? An afternoon by the fire with a good book and hot cup of coffee? Playing in the snow with your kids or grandkids? Talking as a family around the dinner table because everyone is home together?

If we take the time to truly identify what is important, it becomes clear that it is not about the stuff. As Miller states, "contentment is found in knowing that what things mean has nothing to do with who you are" (p. 23).

As we enter 2010, I encourage each of us to look at our current situation as a starting point for learning to be content. It will be the best gift we've ever given to ourselves, as well as those around us!