

BALTIMORE CITY/COUNTY

Literacy Works finds permanent home

Group opens new center in Randallstown Library after years of wandering

By DAVID ANDERSON
SUN STAFF

When Sylvia White was in high school, her principal told her she had to make a choice: She could stay in school and take care of her child, or she could drop out and go to work. She dropped out.

"I had to make a choice: work or school," White said. "I must say I made the wrong choice."

White was at the Randallstown Library yesterday for the dedication of Literacy Works' new Community Technology Center. Now 35, the single mother of three children is working to get her General Educational Development diploma through Literacy Works' adult-education program.

After years of moving from one location to another, the center has found a home in the library on Liberty Road. The center, which opened for classes in September, occupies 1,300 square feet in the lower level.

The center is one of six that Literacy Works — a nonprofit group that promotes adult literacy programs — operates in the Baltimore area. The new facility includes two classrooms, an office and a reception area. Officials expect about 300 students to use it annually.

The adult-education program is a cooperative effort involving Literacy Works, the library system and community centers that provide the space. Community College of Baltimore County provides instructors.

"This, I think, is going to be a shining example of that cooperation," Barry Benjamin, president of Literacy Works' board, said of the center before yesterday's ribbon cutting.

The center cost about \$65,000 to build, said Helene Waranch, Literacy Works' executive director. Waranch said funding came from the U.S. Department of



JED KIRSCHBAUM: SUN STAFF PHOTO

Andy Heggins, 71, and Eileen Porter, both studying for their GED, celebrate at a ribbon cutting during the dedication of the Community Technology Center in the Randallstown Library.



Marie Martin, a counselor at CCBC, looks over Hewett Lieu's shoulder in the Academic Skills Enhancement class at the center.

Education, the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation and Bank of America. The Goldseker Foundation and the county Office of Community Conservation also provided money.

She said the center offers

morning, afternoon and evening classes during the week. Subjects include reading, writing and math. CCBC provides a counselor to help with job counseling and family issues.

"It's really a holistic approach," she said.

White said she plans to take her GED exam by March. If she passes, she would receive a diploma in a formal graduation ceremony, complete with cap and gown. Her 16-year-old son will graduate high school next year, and she hopes to finish before then.

White, who also works about 30 hours a week at a Marshall department store, takes morning classes with 14 other adults. They spend three hours studying everything from math to geography to computer skills.

"There's a togetherness here, everybody is encouraging each other," White said. "If you didn't feel like there was that teamwork, you wouldn't feel like coming here."

Eileen Porter, another student, said she was happy that so many important people attended the opening ceremony. She said she hopes they visit often and support the center.

"The big-shot people, they should come and see how we do our work," she said.