



Your support has changed 403 lives so far this year!

By: Ginger Duiven, Executive Director

I came into work this morning needing a second cup of coffee. I had so many thoughts whirring through my mind as I pondered writing you today. Here are some of them...Sherman Park, elections, education, Jessica, systems, racism, privilege, my dad, unearned disadvantage, Jerome, history, opportunity, change, hope, Richard, recognition, kindness, power....

When I made my way back to the coffee pot, I noticed how all the classrooms were nearly filled with students and tutors at work and I thought, YOU did this! You provided the resources for our small but mighty organization to fill these rooms with people who want to learn, want to succeed, and want to give back themselves. You fill the rooms with volunteers (like you!?) who want to help and have the knowledge, time, know-how, kindness, and patience to do just that. On page 5 you will see just what I am talking about. Julie Clark interviewed one of our students, Alejandra, about her experience, her motivations, her hard work, and her drive to give back. This is just ONE of the 403 stories so far this year. But I am getting ahead of myself.

With coffee in hand, I sat down and tried to focus the swirl of thoughts in my mind and, as I did this, I found it kept coming back to thoughts of my dad. My dad called me a do-gooder when I left my corporate career and started working in the nonprofit sector instead. It wasn't exactly a compliment coming from him. It was a way for him to express his concern and, maybe, his disappointment in me for making this choice. Over the years since I made that career change, I heard from others how he see **You Did This!** continued on **page 2**



Adult Basic Education student, Leroy, studies diligently to improve his reading skills with the patient guidance of volunteer tutor, Mary Kachoyeanos.



A Culture of Appreciation

By: Kelly Burns, GED Program Coordinator

I am writing as the former GED Coordinator for Literacy Services of Wisconsin. The year and a half that I was a staff member at LSW has undoubtedly made me a better person. As I sat down to write this article, I asked myself, "What are some words to describe Literacy Services of Wisconsin?" I wrote, "solidarity, acceptance, compassion, patience, encouragement, praise, and perseverance." I realized that by joining the LSW team, my understanding of those important fundamental values has grown, and continues to grow, each day. There is enough love and happiness in

the building that will crack even the toughest nut. So, to prove that, I'd like to share a few of my favorite things about Literacy Services of Wisconsin.

Most student and tutor pairs begin as complete strangers. The pair agrees to work through material that may bring challenges, misunderstandings, problems, solutions, and with all of that, progress. Whether a student is turning letter sounds into words, or they are working through their umpteenth algebra problem of the day, their tutor is by their side, sharing

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The Sylla·bus

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter



You Did This!

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The Syllabus is the quarterly newsletter of
Literacy Services of Wisconsin,
a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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Founded in 1965, Literacy Services serves adult learners with quality education programs - Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Education Development (GED) test preparation, English Language Learning (ELL) - and integrated and personalized Functional Literacy instruction.

Our mission is to educate, motivate, and inspire engaged adults to achieve greater independence and transform their lives. We are grateful for the broad support of our community, including over 400 volunteers and financial support from 883 individuals; 186 foundations, corporations and organizations; The United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County; and funds administered by Wisconsin Technical College System Adult Education and Family Literacy.

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bragged about me and how proud of me he was. When I talked to him myself, which was nearly every day, he was often trying to pull me into conversations about politics, telling me “dumb blonde” jokes, or sharing the miseries of his life. Now that it has been a month since he passed away from a heart attack, everything is different and, yet, so much is the same.

Losing him has put me in a reflective, searching mindset. I have thought about my own life and how much of it is left. All those thoughts whirring through my mind are related to this. They all seem connected to what needs doing before *my* time is up. What I see clearly is literacy, and Literacy Services has a pivotal role to play in the complex and sometimes troubled world we live in. Literacy skills are the foundation

every person needs to build a long life of family, work, and community. But it goes beyond that, really. When I walked through our classrooms to get a cup of coffee there was no segregation, there was no racial divide, there were white and black people working side by side to reach a common goal. They were building community where it starts, one person to another, getting to know each other, building a base of respect and trust, sharing of themselves and working together towards a shared vision. That's what makes the world go 'round, that is what makes a civil society work, that is how barriers break down, that is how we continue to grow and change throughout our lives and make the world a better place. That is how we make our dads proud, even if he can't tell you so. And that is how 403 lives have been changed, thanks to you.



Warm greetings and friendly faces abound at Literacy Services!



LSW Culture

continued from **Page 1**

insight and answering questions until their student is able to work that problem out on their own. Most times, the tutor is just as excited as the student is! And the student and tutor have achieved that together. After a day's work, they shake hands and vow to do it again.

My next favorite thing about LSW is the dedication our students show. For many LSW students, school had to take a back seat to other priorities in their life. Raising a child, supporting family, working full time; those are all important life events that require a great deal of time and attention. For every student who adds school on top of an already busy schedule, I commend you. It's difficult, and at times it may not seem possible, but the amazing students at LSW have proven it to be achievable. And the program staff works so hard, outside of normal business hours, to keep a flexible classroom schedule that allows adult learners to be successful with their education.

Lastly, the best and most unique feature of LSW is its culture of appreciation and praise. Many have witnessed the emotional interactions that take place at the Quarterly Honors ceremonies, but that same appreciation and praise takes place every day in the classrooms and in the private staff meetings. My involvement with LSW has caused me to be more appreciative of everyone in my life. LSW staff members, volunteer tutors, and fellow students have all become facilitators to this unique culture of admiration. LSW is undoubtedly changing lives for the better.

I feel humbled and amazed by the work that is done each and every day by the members of LSW. This agency reminds people to believe in themselves, and I am hopeful that LSW will continue to bring Milwaukee closer together for another 50 years.



2016 GED Grad, Lashana, and Kelly Burns celebrating on graduation day! Since then, Kelly has taken a position with JusticePoint and Lashana has moved her family to North Carolina. Before leaving LSW, Kelly connected with Lashana to see what life was like after earning her GED and moving out-of-state.

Read all about it below!

Lashana's Life After GED

Upon moving to North Carolina, Lashana started a job cleaning an assisted living home. The owner of the home was so impressed with Lashana's attention to detail and her consistency, that she hired her to clean all of her properties. Lashana then found where the opportunity lay for starting her own business. She began networking and making flyers, business cards, and door hangers to get the word out about her private home and commercial cleaning business. While her daughters help her distribute promotional materials, her husband and mother help her clean. She regularly meets with potential clients, and is excited to report that she calculates price-per-square-foot with ease. She has excelled personally and professionally, and has become more ambitious than ever before. She admits that she used to hold herself back from going after certain jobs, telling herself that she wasn't qualified or didn't have the experience needed. Now, with a GED diploma under her belt and an Associate's Degree in Business underway, she feels confident to pursue any job that she wants. She says, "If you don't apply, then it's already a 'no.' You might as well try!" Lashana has set an important example for her family and fellow students, and we are so proud to call her one of our graduates.



ABE Students Take Prepared Voter Challenge

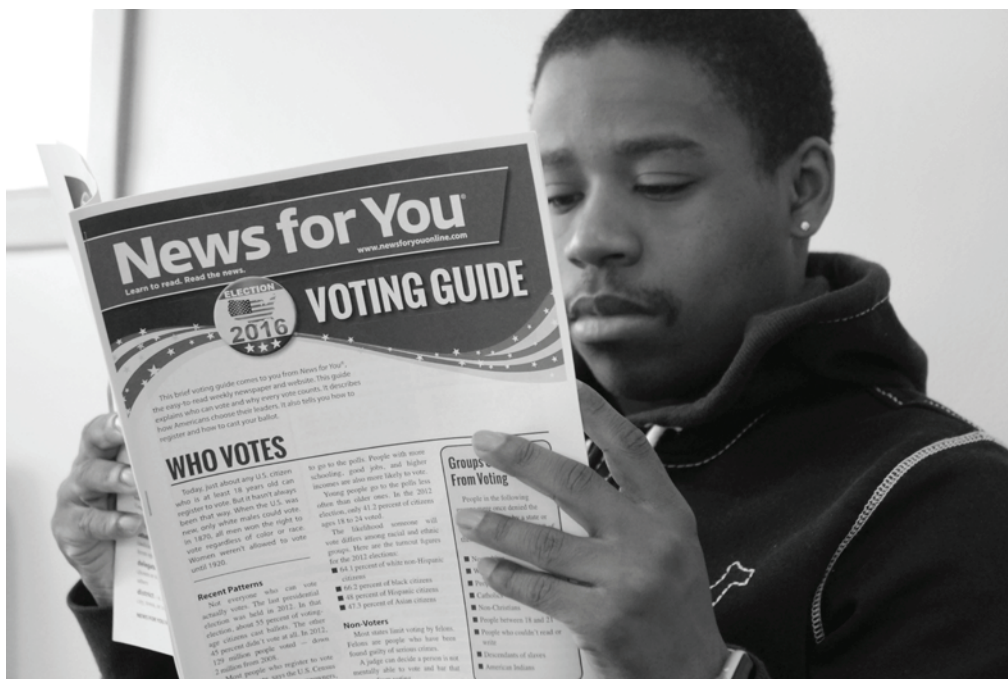
By: Kelly Fox, Director of Adult Basic Education

The 2016 General Election is growing near and candidates are in the home stretch of the campaign season. The political climate has been tense, to say the least, and although the electorate may seem highly polarized, there are plenty of citizens who feel entirely left out of the political process. Polling data indicate that educational attainment may play a role for voters, possibly influencing whether or not they will vote.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, common reasons given for registered voters declining to vote in 2012 included “Not interested” (15.7%), “Didn’t like candidates or issues” (12.7%), and “Other reasons/don’t know” (14.1%). What if the survey options included, “I don’t understand politics,” “I don’t know how or where to vote,” or “I don’t get why voting is important”? How many citizens avoid the polls because they don’t understand the voting process, the issues, or the candidates’ positions? How many of those folks lack the needed literacy skills to find answers to their questions?

My belief that our democracy works best when most of our citizens are engaged has compelled me to find ways to provide our students with access to some basic but vital electoral information. To help students acquire the knowledge, resources, and confidence needed to cast their votes, we created an event called the Prepared Voter Challenge, in which students will complete a series of activities to ready themselves for the upcoming election. The challenge includes registering to vote and procuring acceptable photo identification, of course, but its scope stretches beyond that.

Students who sign up for the Prepared Voter Challenge will read simplified articles on



ABE student, Jerome, analyzes voting resources to help him prepare to participate in democracy.

topics such as reasons to vote, what we vote on, what to watch for in a debate, and how to think critically about campaign ads. Participants will learn about the benefits of registering and voting early, and will work with their tutors to make plans for transportation to the polls. Students will have a chance to identify issues important to them, and access credible, nonpartisan information to see where candidates stand on those issues. They will learn what to expect at their polling location, what to bring with them, proper etiquette at the polls, and how to ask for help from the election workers.

Empowering our adult students to get involved in the political process takes a lot more than helping them register to vote. As educators, we have a responsibility to those we serve to help them navigate the electoral process, to help them understand the responsibilities of citizenship in our society, and to give them access to the tools they need to make informed choices. After most

elections, the public often laments the low voter turnout; the Prepared Voter Challenge is our best effort to educate our community to engage in the process.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, “Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.” Around the same time period, acerbically witty American author and critic Alexander Woollcott commented, “I’m tired of hearing it said that democracy doesn’t work. Of course it doesn’t work. We are supposed to work it.” Taken on its face, Mr. Woollcott’s comment reminds us that our system of government depends upon an engaged and active populace for success – or for failure – and highlights how providing access to electoral information is an imperative in our mission to serve.

Use your voice. Vote!



Poner tu Granito de Arena

By: Julie Clark, Director of English Language Learning

In that moment, I said “Yes, I can do this. I don’t need more interpreters because I can do this for my daughter.” And I did it. I learned by myself, not all, but a lot of medical vocabulary.

Those words came from Alejandra, an ELL student, in recounting a key moment in her life. I was curious about her story and why she chose to pursue a career as a medical interpreter. I interviewed her (in English) and was humbled by her journey and her dedication to make a difference.

Alejandra’s third child was born with Down syndrome and many medical complications. She had three major surgeries as an infant and was in the hospital for months at a time. Alejandra’s mother and sister, along with her husband, took care of the two older children while Alejandra devoted herself to being at the hospital. She was grateful for the medical interpreters provided by the hospital, and she was learning a lot herself. She realized her English had already improved when she heard the medical interpreter’s translation and knew it was not what she had meant. The liberating moment mentioned above came when the cardiology pediatric doctor, whom Alejandra had spoken with a lot, told a nurse who was waiting for an interpreter that Alejandra was in charge, that she could handle it. That was when Alejandra knew she had the ability to communicate. Her love for her daughter gave her the motivation she needed to speak for herself.

Her daughter led her to many other opportunities. Alejandra became a volunteer



With a celebratory bouquet from her tutor, Alejandra happily receives a certificate of achievement from our ELL staff at the 2015 Fourth Quarter Honors Celebration

with an organization for Spanish speakers on the south side called *Alianza Latina*. She took a lot of courses in Spanish about the law, about rights for children with special needs, and about early childhood education. As a volunteer with the West Allis Health Department, she helped organize a group of women called *Mujeres Latinas*. They met once a month and provided information from experienced speakers about nutrition, mental health, food and housing assistance, and other important issues. I was struck that her desire to take care of her daughter led her to reach out to others and help improve their lives.

When Alejandra first came to LSW to improve her English, she was already taking classes at MATC. Though she had started with classes in Early Childhood Education, she changed her career goal to Medical Interpretation. It is a coincidence that both of Alejandra’s tutors here are doctors, and they have been very supportive of her. Alejandra completed the course work last year and is now doing 40 hours of practicum in interpreting.

She is incredibly hard working, but she also has great support, and she will do great phrases. Though we spoke in English for our interview, we did encounter a couple of things that just don’t translate. One such moment was when I was marveling at all she has done: the language acquisition, the academic studies, the family responsibilities and all the volunteer work. I asked how she could do it all, and she said that she did it to give back. She used the phrase *poner tu granito de arena*. She said it was her way of giving back, of thanking the universe. I’ve asked a couple of Spanish-speaking friends how they would translate that phrase. Literally, it means “to put your grain of sand,” but literal translation seldom works. It’s similar to “giving back” or “doing your part,” but it’s bigger and deeper than that. However it is translated, it has enabled this particular strong woman to make a huge impact on her world. I am often in awe at the impact a single life can make, and I am grateful for all the opportunities I have to see that here at Literacy Services.

Tiny Updates, Big News

Adult Basic Education

Aretha composed a business letter to her landlord exerting her rights as a tenant and got the results she wanted.

Penny enrolled in classes at MATC.

Jane enrolled in classes at MATC.

JoeAnn independently read and replied to a letter she received from an old friend.

English Language Learning

May from Laos showed a major improvement in her writing skills. Her family was present when she was recognized at our recent Quarterly Awards Ceremony.

Wendy Watson, one of our ELL tutors, competed in an Iron Man event and qualified to compete in the World Championships in Kona, Hawaii.

Another tutor, **Kate Nelson**, received a Green Ribbon award for her work in environmental initiatives at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

GED Preparation

Justino passed the GED Math test.

Misael passed the GED Language Arts test.

Aissatou passed the GED Language Arts test.



LSW Tutor Changes Career to Help Change Lives

We are excited to introduce Chad Knezel as our new Development Director. Chad started his tenure at LSW as one of our wonderful Wilson tutors in ABE in November 2015. Chad joined us Friday, September 9th, in a new capacity: an employee! Here is a short introduction of Chad, taken from his job application, to help you get to know him a little as he becomes an important member of our team.

I am an accountant by trade; I don't apologize for it, but my passion for this community in general and for literacy specifically has become my focus beyond accounting journal entries, spreadsheets and financials. I have tutored at Literacy Services of Wisconsin (as well as other literacy organizations) since late last fall. These experiences have been incredibly rewarding but ultimately I would like to join a non-profit organization, like Literacy Services of Wisconsin, as an employee.

Through my years in corporate finance I have developed and honed skills in financial analysis, project management and tax accounting. I have mentored staff and built relationships with stakeholders. I have progressed in job responsibility and job title. But I have not served and I have not impacted my community. I am seeking to utilize the skills that I have gained to further the mission of an organization that is serving others and impacting the community.

Chad most recently completed a fifteen-year career of increasing responsibility from Senior Tax Analyst to Tax Manager to Tax Director at Rexnord Industries. He managed a staff of four and focused on compliance, research, and planning. He had oversight of corporate entities as well as a private foundation. In his first weeks on the job, Chad has already demonstrated that the skills gained in his somewhat unusual background for a nonprofit Development Director are indeed transferable.

You can reach **Chad** at chad@literacyservices.org or at **414-344-5878**.

Employment Opportunity

GED Program Coordinator

The GED Program Coordinator assists the GED Program Director in the operation of a volunteer-driven preparation program for adults seeking to earn a GED, or build math skills in preparation for entry into the construction or manufacturing fields. This is a part-time, 30-hours-per-week position.

For more information, or to apply, click on the "Employment" tab on our website:

www.literacyservices.org.

Thank You!

In the space below we recognize all of the donors who made gifts of support between July 2nd and September 30th, 2016. Thank you on behalf of all the students who are motivated to improve their lives through education and learning at Literacy Services!

It is our commitment to recognize every donor based on the donor's wishes. If your name does not appear as you would expect, please contact Dustin by phone at 414-344-5878, or via email at dustin@literacyservices.org.

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In memory of Henry J. Wright
- *James & Judith Callan*

Calendar Bookmarks

Student Enrollment

Accepting New Students! Sign-up for our Initial Assessment Sessions. Call **414-344-5878** for available dates and times.

October

18th - Volunteer Orientation 5:30-6:30pm

November

2nd - Volunteer Orientation 9:30-10:30am

8th - Presidential Election

15th - Volunteer Orientation 5:30-6:30pm

16th - Agency closed for strategic planning

December

7th - Volunteer Orientation 9:30-10:30am

14th- Winter Honors Celebration

Noon-1:00pm.

Winter Break

No Classes - Monday, December 19th - Friday, December 30th

Classes will resume on Monday, January 2nd.

January

10th - Volunteer Orientation 9:30-10:30am

19th - Volunteer Orientation 5:30-6:30pm

Save the Date!

2017 Awards Dinner

Thursday, June 8th

Visit literacyservices.org/events for more information about upcoming events.

Unsubscribe

We hope you enjoy reading about our mission, but we understand if you would prefer not to receive our mailing. To be removed from our mailing list, simply send a message to dustin@literacyservices.org or call us at **414-344-5878**.

Let's Celebrate!



Save the date! 2017 Awards Dinner - Thursday, June 8th

Volunteer Opportunity

Front Desk Support Volunteer

The Front Desk Support Volunteer will assist the organization and staff in communicating with incoming students, donors, and other guests and callers to fulfill their requests, as well as maintain respectful confidentiality of personal information. The shift is 4 hours a week, Friday mornings from 8:30am-12:30pm. We are looking for 4 volunteers, willing to serve on alternating Fridays. To find out more or to apply for this opportunity, please contact **Robin Brisco** by phone at **414-344-5878** or by email at robin@literacyservices.org.

When you are ready to give:

From online giving to employer matching programs, there are many ways to support our students' hard work. A deferred gift can help you balance your financial goals and your charitable interests - all while possibly achieving significant tax benefits. In-kind gifts, such as books, copy paper, or coffee, can be a simple way to contribute to the work of our students and tutors.

Literacy Services has thrived for over 50 years, thanks in part to generous donors who have remembered LSW in their wills. Gifts of appreciated stock and mutual funds from supporters over 70-1/2 years old have also benefited both the donor and Literacy Services. Contact Ginger Duiven if you would like more information or would like to make a contribution this year to take advantage of the tax benefits.

Together we are changing lives and our community!