



Once in a Generation Chance

By: Ginger Duiven, Executive Director

I am guessing that you've heard something about the building boom that is happening in Milwaukee. Currently, there are \$7.2 billion dollars in construction projects planned or underway. Already employers are desperate for qualified workers and in our city there are thousands of adults on the employment sidelines. We have an imperative and the once-in-a-generation chance to fix this classic mismatch of supply and demand. There are opportunities being offered and there are opportunities needed, and we have plan for a new High School Equivalency Diploma program that will help connect people to these possibilities.

Thanks to an amazing \$100,000 grant from a new philanthropy collaborative called Impact100 Greater Milwaukee, our work to create a timely, new competency-based high school equivalent diploma program can move forward. If you're not familiar, competency-based learning is an approach where:

- **Students advance upon mastery of skills**
- **Assessment is meaningful**
- **Outcomes include application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions**

The traditional path to a diploma for an adult who dropped out of high school was a GED. This testing process changed in 2014 and is much more complex than ever before. Therefore, the current GED takes an adult bread-winner longer to complete. For some adults, this means a major slowdown or even a barrier to getting a critical credential and a major obstacle to family supporting wages.

But, there is an alternative path to earn this key credential in Wisconsin. The PI 5.09 is the state's name for this competency-based

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Congratulations, Class of 2016!

Congrats to each of this year's grads! Your hard work paid off! Pictured above (left to right): Jessica, Lashana, Lorenzo, Trina, and Jessyca who were able to attend the citywide commencement ceremony at the Milwaukee Area Technical College.



GED Graduation

By: Sara Risley, GED Tutor

One of the greatest perks of being a tutor in LSW/GED is when a student passes his/her last test. There are often screams, usually hugs, and most always, tears of joy on the faces of both tutor and student. These emotions are even more intense at the citywide GED Commencement at MATC, which I experienced on June 1st.

As a retired professional portrait photographer, I am always excited to photograph the cap and gown portraits of our LSW grads which have now been added to the wall of honor in our GED area of Literacy Services. The students take this portrait most seriously, arranging hair around the cap, straightening ties, and untangling tassels. It moves me to tears seeing the smiles on those faces. I don't even have to work to get a good expression

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The Syllabus

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter



Impact

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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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Contributing Writer/Photographer

Sara Risley

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.

555 N. Plankinton Avenue
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(414) 344-5878



Our moment of jubilation! We are at once ecstatic and humbled to be chosen by Impact100 Greater Milwaukee to receive a transformative grant that will allow us to make an important, lasting impact on our community. (Left to right) Michaela Lewellyn Humpal - LSW Director of Development, Mary Tobin - LSW Board President, Leslie Spencer-Herrera - WRTP/BIG STEP Senior Planner and Development Coordinator, Ginger Duiven - LSW Executive Director, Mark Kessenich - WRTP/BIG STEP President & CEO, David Peters - LSW GED Director.

path to a High School Equivalency Diploma or HSED.

We are creating a PI 5.09 program with a great nonprofit partner with a big name, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership/Building Industry Group Skilled Trades Employment Program or, WRTP/BIG STEP for short. Their mission is to link individuals to careers in construction and manufacturing. With our shared expertise, we will design and implement an innovative learning experience for adults. This one-of-a-kind program in our region will prepare people for manufacturing and construction jobs while earning their HSED. Graduates of this program will have options. They will be well prepared to walk through the doors of WRTP/ BIG STEP and start pre-apprenticeship training. They will be ready to enroll in a career pathway program at MATC. They will be ready to move their lives forward, be partners in their children's education, and enjoy all the happiness, self-worth, and satisfaction of being a contributing member of our community.

This program is poised to help solve three community problems:

- 1. Fill open jobs with residents from our community, keeping resources in the local economy.**
- 2. Use this building boom to get under-educated adults on their way to productive and sustaining employment, linking them to jobs that can pay double the wage of someone without a high school diploma.**
- 3. Improve educational outcomes for the children of our adult students. This happens when parents share the magic and excitement of learning with their kids back at home.**

Stay tuned to our newsletter and other communications for updates on our progress on this exciting project! Thank you Impact100 Greater Milwaukee for selecting this project for your inaugural year grant! We are humbled and honored to earn your support.



We thank Michaela Lewellyn Humpal for her many contributions to Literacy Services as the Director of Development and wish her well as she moves on to a new opportunity! We will miss you!



Commencement

continued from **Page 1**

because the sheer elation and relief shine through on this happy day. Often their children are present and their faces beam with pride at the happiness of their parents.

After pictures, LSW Executive Director Ginger Duiven took the opportunity to congratulate the graduates on their success. GED Program Director David Peters also expressed the pride that everyone in the agency including staff, tutors, and other students feel for the Class of 2016 and their accomplishments.

"This is just the beginning for you. You have proven to yourself that you CAN achieve something you thought was impossible. Take this feeling with you into the next challenge you seek."



Knowing what they can achieve, they see the future as more optimistic than ever before.

tion and procrastinated for ten years after having my son. There is no way I can tell my son the importance of education if I didn't finish. Today I did! If it wasn't for David (Peters) and my mom not giving up on me and believing in me, I would not have crossed that stage today. I am forever grateful. Today was definitely one of the best feelings I have had in a very long time."

As the graduates, families, and friends flowed out onto 6th Street after the moving ceremony, they were greeted by a huge and vivid rainbow arching over the Milwaukee Theatre. If that isn't a fantastic omen for these amazing graduates, I don't know what is!

Congratulations to our GED Class of 2016!



Ginger Duiven and David Peters taking a final moment to share reflection and inspiration.

The most moving part of the ceremony for me was when one of the speakers, a 47-year old mother, had a hard time getting through the emotional parts of her speech. At one point when she commented that she didn't think she was going to make it in life, she broke down completely. From the midst of the throng of graduates came, *"And girl, look at where you are now!"* The crowd erupted into cheers and she smiled and carried on with her speech.

It may be hard to imagine what this simple piece of paper means to these grads. 2016 grad, Trina Milons, posted on the LSW/GED Facebook page: *"I dropped out of high school 3 months and 1.5 credits away from gradua-*



David Peters presenting Jessyca with her diploma on stage at the commencement ceremony.

GED Meets Social Media

For many people, connecting with others through social media is a way of life. By taking advantage of this in creating an LSW/GED Facebook group, we hope to connect LSW/GED alums, current GED students, tutors, and staff to foster an environment of mentorship, support and fellowship. Former LSW/GED students (graduates or former participants), current students, and GED tutors are invited to become a member by going to the group page **LSW/GED** and requesting to join. If you are in touch with former students, please let us know as we are anxious to increase our GED alumni database.

You can check out more pictures from this year's GED Commencement and other day-to-day happenings at the agency on our **Literacy Services of Wisconsin** Facebook page. Be sure to click **LIKE** to get regular updates.



Alumni of Inspiration

By: Kelly Fox, Director of Adult Basic Education

Early last month, former Literacy Services student Wendell Harris was honored at our annual luncheon as our 2016 Alumni of Inspiration. The personal and professional successes that Wendell achieved following his studies here are but a small part of what prompted his selection for this meaningful recognition. Wendell's story is an excellent example of how the connections made here at Literacy Services can change perceptions and impact a whole community.

Determined to improve his writing skills, Wendell came to Literacy Services in 1988. Although the program was full, Wendell convinced Executive Director, Margaret MacLeod, to give him a chance. When he met his tutor, Jim Barrett, Wendell was skeptical of his intentions; he wasn't looking for a mentor or a friend, he just wanted someone to help him learn to write better. Despite his preconceptions, Wendell resolved himself to learning as much as he could from the man, and he soon discovered that Jim wasn't what he expected. Jim hadn't become a volunteer tutor out of altruism; he was serving court-ordered community service hours, to which he had been sentenced for an act of civil disobedience advocating for equal rights. Their friendship was inevitable.

Jim's deep involvement in activism for civil rights and social justice inspired and motivated Wendell in ways beyond improving his written language. With Jim's influence, Wendell became active in local and national causes that work to promote equality, education, and opportunity. Upon his retirement from A.O. Smith, Wendell became active in the local branch of the NAACP and now serves as a member of the Milwaukee Public School Board. Today, Wendell is working with the



2016 Alumni of Inspiration, Wendell Harris (left) was presented the award by Patrick Barrett (right), the son of Wendell's late tutor, Jim Barrett.

Friendship Club to provide their members access to literacy programming in Milwaukee.

Wendell's story reinforces our belief that accomplishments made together are greater than that which one could achieve alone. We don't know who or what inspired Jim's activism, but we know that he inspired in Wendell those same principles and encouraged him to get involved in causes that matter to him. Wendell's substantial contributions to our community pay tribute to the volunteer who taught him about more than grammar. In recognizing Wendell as our first Alumni of Inspiration, we honor his personal journey of struggle and perseverance, and we also celebrate an important connection which has endured to promote positive change.



Wendell Harris and Margaret MacLeod Brahm share an emotional reunion 28 years after Mar first welcomed Wendell through the doors of Literacy Services of Wisconsin.



Struggling Through Communication

By: Julie Clark, Director of English Language Learning

It was an unusual moment a few months ago when one of our ELL students approached my desk speaking Arabic. This is a young man who always greets me in English when he enters the classroom and is, generally, pretty proficient in English. He was very aware that I didn't speak or understand Arabic; yet, here he was approaching my desk clearly speaking in Arabic.

Then I realized that he wasn't actually looking at me, but looking above me. He wasn't speaking Arabic, but rather reading Arabic. He had noticed a beautifully framed document that hangs above my desk. In my first year here at Literacy Services, I had barely noticed it, though I sat underneath it every day. It framed a parchment that had something beautifully written out in Arabic. He was reading the phrase aloud, over and over again.



He asked me if I knew what it meant. I had to admit ignorance. He then attempted to translate it for me, but struggled to find the right words. He said the word "mercy", but then tried to elaborate. He was pantomiming, trying to explain something that comes from deep within a person, a very strong feeling, something that comes out. (This is not unusual. In our little ELL corner of Literacy Services, one is likely to see a lot of gesturing and pantomiming. There's a lot of guessing and stretching and retrying. There's a lot of laughing, too. And there are also a lot of "Aha" moments when meaning is finally understood.)

I finally realized that it wasn't the word "mercy" he was trying to communicate but something deeper. He then told me that the parchment above my desk illustrated the

first line of the Quran. The phrase speaks of Allah as merciful. Rather than trying to define the word "mercy", he was trying to describe the attitude of being merciful. For him, the meaning was deeper, personal and spiritual. He said that the words were beautiful, and he was frustrated that he couldn't communicate that beauty to me.

I remember the day I had that conversation with the young man. It was March 22nd. Earlier that morning, bombs went off at the Brussels airport and in a subway station. That evening when I went home and watched the news, I saw a terrifying image. It was video from the dark subway station that morning in Brussels. It showed a long line of people walking in the dark. They were hurt, bleeding, crying and confused. Yet they walked, in a line, together, trying to get away from the danger. It was terribly upsetting, but I kept thinking of that idea "merciful." In the midst of that horror, I sensed something incredibly strong. This group of strangers, brought together by violence and fear, were helping each other out of that tunnel, through the darkness, through the fear.

Our tutors and students are a little band of strangers helping each other through. I think that is a great image of the work here in the ELL program at Literacy Services. Our tutors understand that it is a traumatic experience to be plopped into a culture that you don't know anything about and have to communicate in a language that you don't fully understand. Our tutors do all they can to help our students learn English. They talk slowly, ask questions, pantomime, laugh, guess and giggle. They listen and listen and listen and listen some more. They unlock the door that keeps our students out and alone, and they welcome them in where they can be heard and understood. They show great caring and compassion. I think they know what mercy is.

Tiny Updates, Big News

Adult Basic Education

James B. reports a, "new feeling of self-confidence – that I can deal with whatever life throws my way in the future."

Roberto R. reported, "I was in the room with Aurora professionals sharing my story for their website, dressed professionally and feeling comfortable."

Maria B. is using a computer program to teach herself typing.

English Language Learning

Grazi, an ELL student, is returning to Brazil after eight months in Milwaukee. She told us that her incredible tutors have helped her become very comfortable in conversational English. She will be able to use her English skills to advance in her Public Relations career in Brazil.

Myunghee Jun told us this week that a research article that she wrote in English has been accepted for publication in an American journal of nursing. She has had many articles published in Korean, but this is her first article published in English.

GED Preparation

Congratulations Matt, Trina, Lorenzo, Jessica, Lashana, and Jessyca on completing the GED!

Thank You!

In the space below we recognize all of the donors who made gifts of support between January 1st and July 1st, 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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Dane Baumgartner
Alexis Bernard
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John & Sally Breckenridge
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 -Mary Stearns
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 In honor of her tutors
 -Hyo Jin Han
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 Klabunde, Sue Harman, and Chris Traxler
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 -Nichole Jackson
 In honor of the Weedens
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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!

Calendar Bookmarks

Student Enrollment

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

July

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

August

3rd - Volunteer Orientation 9:30-10:30am

16th - Volunteer Orientation 5:30-6:30pm

Summer Break

No Classes - Monday, August 29th - Monday, September 5th (Labor Day)

Classes will resume on Tuesday, September 6th.

September

5th - Labor Day (No Classes)

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

15th - Volunteer Orientation Noon-1:00pm

21st - Autumn Honors Celebration
5:30-7:00pm.

October

5th - Volunteer Orientation 9:30-10:30am

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

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

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2016 Awards Luncheon

Thank you for supporting this year's Awards luncheon.

We are grateful to all of the individuals, corporations, and organizations who contributed to the success of this year's Awards Luncheon. Your support allows us to honor our inspiring awardees and continue the learning partnerships that lead to the life-changing achievements our students seek when they enter our doors.

Congratulations to our 2016 Inspiration Award recipients:

**Andrew
Buford**



ABE Student of
Inspiration

**Mehnaz
Abedia**



ELL Student of
Inspiration

**Lorenzo
Castro**



GED Student of
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Thank you to everyone who helped us match the \$100,000 RA Stevens Endowment Grant and placed our agency in a stronger position to adapt to future needs.

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