



Making Plans

By: *Ginger Duiven, Executive Director*

How do people make decisions?
How do they chart a course of action,
grapple with the big question about why
am I here? What is my purpose?

I have had a lifelong rhythm of reflecting on these questions as I see what I call a zero-birthday on the horizon. At 20 it was “what am I going to do with my life?”, at 30 it was contemplation about career and family, at 40 it was another round of reflections on career through the lens of my growing clarity of purpose, and at 50 (yes, 50!) it was about going after a seemingly impossible long time goal of a master’s degree. In my personal life, I found this kind of personal strategic planning to be a great way to correct course, take stock of past learning and growth and figure out what I needed to do next. My planning led me to move to a new city, change careers, leave a failing relationship and earn that master’s degree.

Since I started at Literacy Services I have been thinking about how effective organizations make decisions. I focused on learning about how successful institutions make and implement strategies and plans. I asked myself, what is our purpose here at Literacy Services? Are we meeting the needs of the community?

I can see that the world around us is changing so rapidly. I understand that it’s not safe to assume that what we are doing and how we are doing it today are still the best ways to serve our mission into tomorrow. We talk about these questions and issues at board meetings and staff

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Assistant Director of Operations, Robin Brisco, and GED Tutor Volunteer, Chris Colby, are two of the forty people gathered at our full day strategic planning session.

Art’s Story

By: *Art Walker, ABE Student*

Hi, my name is Art, and I’m a student here at Literacy Services. This is my story.

Many years ago, I was in a six-month alcohol and drug program at Matt Talbot Recovery Services. One guy there was going to Literacy Services. He asked me if I wanted to go with him and enroll there. I thought about my mother and how she had gone there to learn to read, so I thought I’d try it, too.

When I got there, the tutors were very encouraging to me. I completed a program at Literacy Services and then I tried MATC. When I got there they were moving so fast that I couldn’t keep up. There were no tutors there to help me like at Literacy Services. I stopped going there because I did not find the support I needed.

Twenty-four years later, in 2013, I decided to go back to Literacy Services and get some computer skills. They had computer classes to get me started. I had a tutor, MaryAnn, who showed me

Student Perspective

how to find information on the computer. I was so amazed with what you can do with a computer! She helped me look up Betsy Smith, a singer that I wanted to know more about. I wanted to learn more. The door was open.

Learning how to use the computer gave me help with Bible study at church. I wrote a paper on the meaning of the Fruits of the Spirit. Now I could read and share what I found on the computer with my group. I was not alienated any more.

see **Art** continued on **page 2**



The Syllabus

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

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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Art

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I was also having problems with my hearing because I am going deaf. My other tutor, Debbie, found a small business that helps people who can't afford to buy hearing aids. That was a big help to me. Now I can hear people talking to me. Debbie also helped me get a used laptop from her daughter-in-law. Now I have some computer skills and a computer. I am a man on a mission!

I wrote a script on black history for my church. I found everything I needed on the computer myself. I found songs, poems and information on what to include in the introduction. I wrote the entire program. My presentation inspired three more presentations so that the whole month of February was dedicated to black history.

At Literacy Services, the staff and tutors tried to get me to read more. Finally I agreed to read *The Jackie Robinson Story*. It was the first book I'd ever read. He was a fighter. I learned that by focusing on your goals and dreams, you can still accomplish what you want in life, like Jackie did.

I also completed the Pre-GED program. That wasn't easy for me to do. I had a storm that

came into my life. My kids' mother died all of sudden and I couldn't concentrate and focus

Before the funeral, I wrote her eulogy. By coming to Literacy Services, I found the courage to write and deliver the eulogy to over 300 people at the funeral. I had written things before, but many times my writing was like when a clown juggles—the words were all over the place. But at Literacy Services my writing gained discipline, consistency, and organization.

Because of this distraction, however, I couldn't pass the Pre-GED test that I needed to. I failed three times, but MaryAnn kept saying to me, "You can pass the test." Kelly Fox knew what areas I needed to work on to pass, and that's what she assigned me to do. So I gave it one more try. The next time I passed the test. Kelly and my tutors were there for me all the way.

I have also started a small business. Graduating from the Pre-GED program has given me the confidence and the courage to go out into the world and be my own man. My business has given me independence and has also helped my family.

Right now, I'm working on writing my family's history to leave to my kids, grand-kids and future generations. I'm taking all the oral history and writing it down so it won't be lost. This is important for my family's health and knowledge of their history.

In closing, I just want to thank everyone, tutors and staff, for your time, patience and caring for people. You're reaching out to people from all walks of life who are looking for a little help trying to make their lives better. I have told others that they could benefit by coming here. May God bless Literacy Services.





Food – The Universal Language

By: Julie Clark, Director of English Language Learning

Imagine, if you will, a scene: plates piled high with food from around the world; people sitting around elegant dining tables; voices inquiring, explaining and describing; laughter ringing out. Such was the scene of our first ever ELL Potluck held on a Thursday evening in October. We transformed the ABE classroom space into a dining room with a menu that rivaled the best of any five star international restaurant.

I wish I could recall all the dishes and the countries they represented, but I can't. What I do recall is a sense of excitement and joy. Our students, tutors, their families and friends gathered around a table of beautifully prepared food. Each dish was labeled with its name and the country it came from. There was a lot of conversation about what was in each dish and who made it. It was an incredible feast.

With the help of high school students from Reagan High School's International Club, we set up tables and chairs so groups of 8 – 10 could sit together. We filled every available space. There was a buzz in the room as students and tutors met and talked with each other. At one point I looked up and realized that everyone in the room was speaking in English. They had to - it was the only language they had in common. Iranians were sitting with people from South Korea and Brazil, while students from Mexico and China chatted with a student from the Philippines. And, of course we had a fair share of English speaking tutors and their guests.

When Valentyn from Ukraine, one of the students at my table, told me that he wanted to know where everyone was from, I realized that, though I knew all the students and tutors in the room, they didn't necessarily know each other. Valentyn wanted everyone to stand up and say where they were from. I



ELL students, tutors, and staff enjoy homemade food from China, South Korea, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Mexico, Colombia, and many more countries.

explained to him that I couldn't ask that of people; they might be intimidated or afraid to speak in front of such a large group. Valentyn insisted, so I invited the group to tell us who they were and where they were from.

Every. Single. Person. Spoke. One after another, people stood up and introduced themselves. And they didn't just say their name and country. Many spoke about their journeys. Many expressed gratitude to Literacy Services. Others talked about being afraid often when they were out in public and how safe they felt here at LSW. I was moved by their willingness to speak, their courage, and their journeys. They were from all parts of the world, and the dishes they shared had many different ingredients, yet somehow we were all brought together. We listened to one another. We encouraged one

another. In that moment I realized that we were no longer a group of students and their tutors. We were a community.

Even the high school students stood and spoke. Some of them shared their own families' journeys here. One of the first students said, "I've lived in Milwaukee my whole life, and I had no idea this place existed. I'm glad I'm here." Of course, the retired high school teacher in me did a little happy dance. Those teenagers came to move tables and chairs, but they left with more. Their eyes, their minds, and their hearts were opened. They served us, but we educated them. We invited them into our community. I am so grateful that we continue to build those bridges that connect people from different backgrounds. It is especially nice when the bridge leads to a feast.



We thank Arlette Bennett for her many contributions to our English Language Learning program as the Community Engagement Coordinator and wish her well as she moves on to a new opportunity! We will miss you!



Planning

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meetings. Ultimately maybe it was LSW's 50th birthday in 2015 that tipped the scales for us to commit to work on a new strategic plan. ;)

This summer the board formed a Strategic Planning Task Force to guide the planning process. Board Member Robert Lawton volunteered to serve as the chair of this task force and to recruit members to it. He assembled an amazing group! He asked our current board president and our three recent past board presidents to serve and they all agreed. Mary Tobin, David Hanson, Kim Metcalf-Kupres, and Mark Short were joined by respected former LSW Executive Director and experienced nonprofit leader, Mar MacLeod Brahm, to round out a group of knowledgeable leaders. I also serve on this task force.

In no time, this group proposed a process and a consultant team to the board of directors for their approval. The board voted to move forward and off we went! On November 16 we met at Manpower's world headquarters and filled a beautiful meeting room with 40 people representing the board, volunteers, and staff (Thanks again to Board Member Grace LoCoco!). We pounded through an aggressive agenda based on the book *The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution* by David La Piana. We spent 8 hours together under the guidance of our consultant team of Dennis Johnson and Ben Williams, from the Madison-based Sort Sol Group.

As I write you now, we are still knee deep in refining the ideas, draft strategies, purpose statement, and many other critical pieces of what will become Literacy Services' strategic plan. It is not yet clear how the final plan will take shape, but one thing is clear. Eleven board members, 14 volunteer tutors, and 13 staff members are so committed and



Teams of Literacy Services' board of directors, volunteers, and staff worked together to share their different perspectives and hone the vision of our agency during our strategic planning retreat.

passionate about this mission, this organization and our students that they dedicated a full day out of their busy lives to contribute what they know, what they feel and want for this organization. It left us exhausted, more connected and knowledgeable. The buzz created by this group was nothing short of exhilarating! It left me feeling "filled up" by what I can best describe as "the goodness" in that room. I felt energized with confidence that Literacy Services will be ready to jump to the next level, successfully tackle some of the toughest issues our community faces, and

celebrate many more zero birthdays to come. We look forward to sharing the results of this process with our community. Stay tuned for updates in the New Year! In the meantime, if you have an idea, a concern or encouragement you would like to share, write me at ginger@literacyservices.org. **We need your support too, now more than ever!** Please consider making a donation before the year ends! I promise your hard earned dollars will be wisely put to good use to reach more adults, change more lives, and put hopes and dreams into action.

Thanks to the following people who have joined in our planning process so far!

Arlette Bennett
Robin Brisco
Carol Brown
Julie Clark
Kara Coates
Chris Colby
Ginger Duiven
Peg Edquist
Kelly Fox
Dan Graham
Lori Hanes

Joan Hansen
David Hanson
Rebeca Heaton-Juarez
Dennis Johnson
Robert Kennedy
Mary Klabunde
Chad Knezel
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Robert Lawton
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Grace Liebenstein
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Mary Tobin
Marie Weiss
Ben Williams



Quarterly Honors – a celebration of community

By: David Peters, GED Director

Do you hunger for a sense of community?

Four times a year the Literacy Services' community takes pause from the relentlessness of our highly individualized, one on one, skill building work to come together for a Quarterly Honors Celebration. Through distinct program offerings we share a common purpose: to help fellow members of the Greater Milwaukee Area achieve increased access to the community of which we are all a part. We are reminded that the individual achievements that are honored at these quarterly gatherings are the fruit of a collaborative effort of many people – our LSW community.

The LSW community centers on the adult learner as a "hub." Extending to and connecting with this hub at different points, are spokes. Children, families, friends, employers, social workers, volunteers, funders, agency board and staff, and others

I'm just so grateful for the literacy program.

I've been looking for this all my life.

I'm just so grateful" - Melvin at our summer Quarterly Honors Celebration

all may be spokes, providing support in their differing capacities. These "spokes" are connected not only to the learner, but also to each other through the shared effort. In the Honors Ceremony, parts of this community gather to represent and invoke the far larger community, beyond the walls of the agency.

The LSW community is a vibrant, multi-faceted, yet focused expression of the Greater Milwaukee Area Community. There are good things happening here – every day!

On Wednesday, December 14th, from 12:00pm – 1:00pm we'll hold our Quarterly Honors Celebration – please join us!

Together, through honoring student achievement, we'll celebrate the fruit of our collective efforts and in doing so; be reminded that each of us are part of a larger effort to make our community better, one life at a time. See you there!



Director of Adult Basic Education, Kelly Fox (left), and Assistant Director of Adult Basic Education, Bianca Ortiz (right), join Melvin for a celebratory photo after his completion of the Wilson Reading System.

Join us Wednesday, December 14th at noon for our winter Quarterly Honors Celebration! Please let us know in advance if you are planning to attend.

Contact Robin at (414) 344-5878 or via email at robin@literacyservices.org.

Tiny Updates, Big News

Adult Basic Education

Melvin is able to help his son with reading skills and concepts.

Carey is able to read mail better and help his grandchildren with homework.

Brian was able to use his improved skills to get his Driver's License reinstated and earned a lower insurance rate.

Renesha helped her nieces enroll in school.

English Language Learning

Dilshad got a job working in a kindergarten class in a school. Because the children come from many different language backgrounds, all instruction is done in English. Dilshad is using her English skills every day.

Jose, a relatively new citizen, not only voted for the first time this year, but he also voted EARLY!

GED Preparation

Congratulations to **Justino** who recently completed his GED and has since entered into WRTP/BIG STEP's pre-apprenticeship readiness program. Justino is pursuing his goal to become an electrician.

All LSW GED students who have gone to take the newly required civics test have passed with flying colors!

Well done, everybody!

Thank You!

In the space below we recognize all of the donors who made gifts or pledged support between October 1st and November 23rd, 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 Chad Knezel by phone at 414-344-5878, or via email at chad@literacyservices.org.

In-Kind & Book Donations

Ann Baer
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Pam Frydman-Roza
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Women of Milwaukee Athletic Club Book Drive

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The Streich Family Foundation
Wisconsin Technical College System -
Adult Education and Family Literacy

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In memory of Sara "Sally" Breckenridge
- Edward & Linda Sasse
In memory of Mary O'Connor Craig
- Rick & Pat Ballo
- Mary & Dan Breitrick
- Judy Brewer
- Joan Cincotta
- Curt & Carrie Downes
- Ted & Dawn Fischer
- Julie & Mike Gartland
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In memory of Mary Ann Crossot

- Katharine Banzhaf
In memory of Mary Roseman Henningsen
and Paul Henningsen
- Nancy Henningsen
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- Peter & Katherine Cops
- Louis Sampson Cornelius &
Priscilla Ann Boroniec
- Willie DiFabio
- Lawrence & Holly Haskin
- Cathy Kendrigan
- Patrick & Susanna Mooney
- Jenann Olsen
- Leo & Anne Roseman
- Charles Streich

In honor of the birthday of Chad Knezel

- Jeffry & Shelby Knezel
In memory of Diane Harriet Lindenau
- David Hurlbutt

In memory of Shirley Morgan

- Robin & Rob Engl
In memory of Mary Ann Neevel
- Mary B. & Robert A. Jones

In memory of Mary Alice & Bob Rasmussen

- Rob L. Rasmussen
In memory of Dwight Teel
- David Hurlbutt

In memory of Charles Thunander

- Marge Brewer
- Jeff Martinka
- Mary Stearns

In honor of the birthday of Don Waterman

- John & Paige Waterman
- Margaret Waterman

Thank You to all who pledged
a gift to Literacy Services during
United Way's 2016 Campaign:

Katie Almquist
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Hillary Wucherer
Paul & Sandy Wysocki
Xugang Zhang
Carolyn Ziebert

United Way's Season of Caring



Special thanks to volunteers from US Bank (pictured above) and Johnson Controls who helped us with a book-wrapping project during United Way's 2016 Season of Caring.

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 to make a contribution this year to take advantage of the tax benefits.

Together we are changing lives and our community!

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**.

Calendar Bookmarks

Student Enrollment

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

December

14th - Quarterly 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

16th - No Classes

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

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

February

1st - Volunteer Orientation 9:30-10:30am

10th - Volunteer Appreciation Party

16th - Volunteer Orientation Noon-1:00pm

March

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

22nd - 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 chad@literacyservices.org or call us at **414-344-5878**.

Announcements



Meet Mai: Our New GED Program Coordinator

We are excited to welcome the newest member of the Literacy Services team, Mai Lee. Mai joins us as our GED Program Coordinator. An Alverno graduate, she has a B.S. in Biology, B.S. in Nutrition, and an M.S. in Oriental Medicine. Mai has diverse experience in working with Hmong and Laotian organizations, the City of Milwaukee, as well as maintaining a private practice in acupuncture. She has tutored in various subject areas from middle school through the college level with an emphasis in math and science. Mai has engaged in community outreach and information sessions and has also conducted training and fundraising activities. She enjoys working with the community and is excited about joining the Literacy Services team.

Welcome, Mai!

Employment Opportunity

English Language Learning Assistant Director

The English Language Learning (ELL) Assistant Director is a limited term part time (12 hours per week) grant funded position. Reporting to the ELL Program Director, the Assistant Director will work with a team to oversee classroom operations, interview and enroll new students, develop curriculum, provide ongoing training and support for tutors, and implement the community engagement component of the ELL program.

For more information, or to apply visit: www.literacyservices.org/employment

Parking Announcement:

Change in Parking to Provide Greater Onsite Availability

Good things are happening in our parking lot! Be on the look-out for emails and signage around the agency with important updates about implementation of the new parking system. The new system will create greater onsite parking availability for our volunteers, students, and guests. Assistant Director of Operations, Robin Brisco, is currently piloting the new program to ensure that things are working properly when we roll out the new system. Stay tuned for more information!

How do you know if Literacy Services is closed for inclement weather?

Occasionally Literacy Services will cancel classes and close due to adverse or unsafe weather conditions. To be alerted to these closings follow local media announcements for weather related closings, call our office or check our website to verify if we have canceled classes.