



## You are a Fine Gardener!

By: Ginger Duiven, Executive Director

You can never really know when you plant a seed what the future holds. You can't begin to predict the challenges ahead, the careless footfall, badly timed hailstorm, drought or hatch of hungry insects. You do the best you can to protect and nurture. You support and nourish. While you never stop tending, you do step back sometimes to watch your seed grow.

So it is for you, the founders, donors, board members and volunteers—the gardeners of Literacy Services. Gordon Ralph, Carl Moebius, Lee Spickard, James Ericson, Bob Abendroth, Eugene Hein, Joyce Engstrom and Harold Trittin were among many in 1965 who played a role in planting and tending the seed that has grown into the garden we know as Literacy Services of Wisconsin. The congregations from First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa, Christ Presbyterian and North Shore Congregational Church served as fertile ground in which the seed could grow. These churches had access to leadership skills and resources, financial support, community connections and most of all, willing volunteers. They along with the founders helped nurture, fund, guide, inspire and sustain the young organization built from one powerful seed of an idea—Each One, Teach One. Dr. Frank Laubach, the father of a global literacy movement, pioneered this innovative idea in 1935 and spread it across the globe, including, eventually, to Milwaukee.

The effort to combat illiteracy didn't end

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## GED Graduation – Reflections

By: David Peters, Director of GED

On June 4th I had the honor of representing Literacy Services of Wisconsin at the city-wide GED commencement ceremony held at the Milwaukee Theater. Graduates from our GED program were recognized as well as those from other programs in Milwaukee. The ceremony is the culminating event for students in the program and provides a natural opportunity to reflect on the impact the GED and Literacy Services have had in the lives of some of our recent grads.

Calvin came to us in 2012 having been a school bus driver since 1997. Despite his many years of experience as a driver, Calvin had been unsuccessful when trying to obtain more lucrative driving jobs. He had experience, demonstrated expertise and a commercial driver's license. What he didn't have was a GED. Shortly after getting his GED, he called to tell me he had gotten a job driving a truck. The new job pays almost \$7 an hour more than his bus-driving job. All he needed was the

GED credential! Calvin credits the support and encouragement he received at LSW as instrumental to his success. What is he doing with the difference in earnings? He's putting it away toward a down payment on a house for his family.

The first time I met Marc he told me that his dream was to be a diesel mechanic and to open his own garage. He knew that meant going to school to get the technical knowledge, and he knew that meant getting his GED. Upon getting his GED, Marc immediately enrolled in a diesel mechanic program. He has described his voracious desire to continue learning as an "addiction." "Once I started learning things and passing tests, I wanted to keep on going," he says. For Marc, the individualized, one-on-one model of program delivery helped make his experience at Literacy Services successful. "Because it was

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# The Syllabus

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

The Syllabus is the quarterly newsletter of  
Literacy Services of Wisconsin,  
a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

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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.

Founded in 1965, 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 and funds administered by Wisconsin Technical College System Adult Education and Family Literacy.

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## Summer of Change

By: Brandon Dey, Adult Basic Education Intern

As an intern at Literacy Services of Wisconsin this summer, I've been responsible for designing and implementing a pilot Math Basics course. I've created a math curriculum and lesson plans tailored to meet the needs of our students as they encounter math. With any new job, it goes unquestioned that responsibilities and outcomes not mentioned in the job description will inevitably crop up; such is life. The nature of my tasks was specified clearly prior to beginning the job. Omitted, however, was any mention of the personal impact I would experience from what I expected to be just another summer internship.

It may be said, almost banally, what volunteering and helping disadvantaged populations does for the human spirit: how it has a way of inspiring our resolve to do good in the world, the way in which it galvanizes us to become better individuals ourselves, how it gives us a new perspective. Beyond these somewhat routine observations, however, my short stay at Literacy Services of Wisconsin has stirred up such intense feelings that I want you to understand the magnitude of emotion that washes over me on a daily basis.

The first time I was rendered speechless here occurred within my first week. As a greenhorn intern, I was encouraged to observe part of a tutoring session to see where our students were at educationally. As I sat down across from a young man, I noticed his confusion at my unexpected presence. Fifteen minutes into the lesson, the tutor began writing gibberish words on a whiteboard, and the student first looked quizzically at her and then asked, rather innocuously, "Are these real words?" A familiar question for experienced ABE tutors, but to me, the novice intern, it gave me real perspective. This perspective seeded a deep desire to *help* and to encourage.

While I may have been speechless in the face of what I at first thought of as helplessness,

*"I want you to understand the magnitude of emotion that washes over me daily."*

throughout the summer I've witnessed extraordinary strength. I've seen timidity transformed into confidence as debilitating math fears were dismantled. I've seen accomplishment overcome frustration. I've seen the drive to learn in students' eyes. But I've also seen that drive to learn weaken and threaten to become extinguished, only to be fueled again by something no one can teach: grit. It's amazing to see. It's *rewarding*.

I understand that math, more than any other subject, can make students feel embarrassed, inadequate, exposed. But my students have shown unexpected courage and resilience throughout this program. They love being here, are invigorated by the challenge, and push themselves out of their comfort zone to learn something that they recognize will aid them in life. Their enthusiasm for these topics continues to inspire me.

This experience has awakened in me a new sensitivity and has led me to question the assumptions I hold about people. It's so easy for the mind of the careless person to be hijacked by assumptions grounded in nothing but appearances and an incomplete history. I'm not going to tell you that I have some kind of absolute newfound faith in humanity and this is all unicorns, smiles, and jubilant high fives. I will, however, tell you that if there is any one thing that I will take away from this internship at LSW, it will be the memory of wrongly thinking a very capable person helpless and the discovery of a tenacity of the human will I've never encountered before.



## Reflections

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just the tutor and me, I felt more comfortable asking questions about the things I didn't understand." As a newly certified diesel mechanic, continuing to build his knowledge base with additional classes, engaged in realizing his dream, he told me recently, "I'm proud of where I'm at in life right now."

One important outcome of pursuing and obtaining a GED is the impact that example may have on someone else. Neri celebrated her GED completion in June. The persistence she demonstrated in its pursuit was remarkable, and she has just finished her first semester toward a degree in nursing. While Neri's achievements are notable, I have been particularly struck by the reaction of her family to those efforts. In the wake of her success, Neri's mother, two sisters and a cousin have enrolled at Literacy Services. Additionally, as Neri was striving in those final months to finish her GED, her children were on the honor roll at their schools. Is this all coincidence? Would Neri's family members have engaged when and how they did without the energy of her example as encouragement?

At the GED commencement, graduates from our program crossed the stage, one by one, each wearing a robe, cap, tassel and a big smile. I shook their hands and congratulated them. Later in the ceremony, as graduates moved their tassels from one side of their mortarboards to the other, an ecstatic cry of relief, pride and hope rose from their midst. Hearing that sustained expression of joy gave me goose bumps and brought a tear to my eyes.

It is a proud, bittersweet moment for me when the success of our students takes them beyond our doors to the next phase of their lives. Yet, even as we miss them, their present achievements and those yet to come are part of the living legacy of Literacy Services of Wisconsin. Those who support this work have a hand in helping to create and maintain this legacy. As this agency approaches its 50th year, we the volunteers, funders, staff and board of directors are now the sustaining force of this endeavor. The successes exemplified by Calvin, Marc, Neri and many others remind us why, after all these years, it still matters.



## Gardener

*continued from Page 1*

with those early donors, board members and volunteers. It has carried on for 50 years! New folks took up the watering can and the fertilizer to help the young garden grow. New donors, board members and volunteers saw the value of the powerful idea and joined in to nurture and grow the fledgling organization.

William H. Brady did. Jane Bradley Petit did. The Luber family and the Gill family

did. The Flanner family did. Anne McNeer did. They took leadership roles and made leadership gifts to help the organization grow, become more sustainable and extend the circle of support around it. Anne "Wing" Geilfus (Hamilton) and Judy Harding did some heavy lifting to raise important funds needed to serve more adults. Five decades of change, a few storms and more than a few droughts have passed. Through it all, the donors and volunteers, along with dedicated staff, have stood together to meet those challenges. There were the inevitable conflicts and differences of opinion, philosophy or approach. Somehow, those

perspectives made all involved stronger and the organization better with time.

Through it all, the "seed" has continued to produce new shoots and more seeds. There have been great accomplishments. Thousands of students have flourished thanks to their tutors' guidance and encouragement, as well as countless hours of their own hard work. Thousands of students have achieved their goals and gone out into our community to work, raise children and grandchildren, and thrive. The joys of reading, and through it, lifelong learning, are gifts our volunteers, staff and donors have given. They are gifts that impact generations.

I couldn't be more humbled and honored to serve this remarkable, full-grown organization as Executive Director as we celebrate 50 years of unlocking potential in ourselves, in our communities, and in all the motivated adults who do the hard work to better their lives. A heartfelt thank you to all of you gardeners!



*Archive photo of Gordon Ralph with his wife (left) & tutor, Carol Larson (right)*



# Partnerships and Passages

*By: Robin Brisco*

The receptionist plays an important role in Literacy Services' day-to-day operations. He or she is the voice on the phone that receives an incredible array of calls each day, from prospective students and volunteers to an individual calling to make a contribution. This is the person who creates that important first impression and efficiently conveys timely information to the right people. Add to that, the receptionist is the face of Literacy Services: he or she greets all visitors, students and tutors each day and establishes a warm and inviting atmosphere for all who come through the door.



***Billy Norris***

For the past two years, Billy Norris has been that face - first thing in the morning, 8:30 sharp, Monday to Friday. Billy has served this important role since October 9, 2012, delighting us with his charm, winning personality and great communication skills, all of which are essential for the Literacy Services ambassador at the front desk. Billy embraced the receptionist duties with enthusiasm and determination, quickly adding administrative duties to his role. He has a Master of Science degree in Human Services and past work experience as a supervisor at the Milwaukee Post Office for over twenty years. With his good nature and eagerness to learn new responsibilities, he quickly added to the basic administrative skills he had when he arrived. As he would tell you, "I'm teachable."

Billy came to us through the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which is a branch of the Service/Employment/Redevelopment - Jobs for Progress National, Inc. (SER-National). SCSEP is a paid training program that places low-income seniors in jobs throughout the community, allowing them to gain experience and prepare for full-time permanent positions. Billy's term with SCSEP concluded on September 7, 2014.

At the time of this article, Billy is in pursuit of a new position with a new organization. If you know of a job opportunity, please do let us know and we will forward it on to him. Billy has been a wonderful addition to the team at Literacy Services. His personality, warmth and rapport with tutors and students alike have brought smiles to many faces over the last 23 months. He will be missed, but we are sending him off with lots of thanks and wishes for good fortune on his upcoming journey.



***Kim Krause***

Those of you who came in the evening during the spring and early summer months had the pleasure of meeting our evening receptionist, Kim Krause. Kim was here on an internship provided through the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), administered by Adonai Employment, Inc. This program also helps people reenter the work force after being displaced by inserting them in jobs throughout the community, helping them to obtain valuable work experience as they transition back into the labor force. Kim came to us with wonderful receptionist ability and excellent administrative skills. She was a real asset to Literacy Services during her internship. She not only ably handled the busy reception desk and the phone, but assisted staff members in various computer projects on a daily basis. After completing her internship on July 5th, she has delighted us with her presence as a volunteer, keeping Literacy Services running smoothly during my recent vacations, so don't be surprised if you see her around from time to time.

Literacy Services continues to partner with SER-National and DVR to provide individuals with work experience and training to help them on their paths to permanent employment. These programs help us keep administrative costs low and add capacity and quality to Literacy Services' daily operations and programs.





# Meet Lume:

## 2014 Student of Inspiration - English Language Learning Program

*By Katia Salyards, Enrollment & Assessment Specialist*

**Lume Abduli has been an ELL student at LSW since April 2013. In 2011 she moved to Wisconsin from the small village of Zajas in Macedonia, where she spoke her native language of Albanian. After graduating from medical high school, Lume married her husband, Ilir, who is Albanian as well, but was born and raised in Monroe, Wisconsin. Shortly thereafter, they moved to Monroe.**

### What was life like when you first moved to Wisconsin?

New land, new food, and new places... I learned some English in school, but it's not the same once you're using it in the US. Americans talked fast and I didn't know anything. I needed to ask them like three times to repeat. I had to have somebody go to appointments with me. You feel lost; you feel like you don't know anything anymore. It wasn't fun.

I went for tutoring in Monroe, and got a lot of help from my tutor Jo. I also volunteered at Monroe hospital, and helped with the family business. Volunteering and working helped me learn English faster because I spoke it all the time.

### What led you to come to LSW?

In 2013 we moved to Milwaukee. For most of the day, my husband worked and I was in the apartment, watching TV, feeling lost and depressed. I didn't have a job, or friends, and wasn't familiar with the city.

I wanted to go to college in August at MATC and needed help preparing for my entrance tests.

### Did coming to LSW help your situation?

Yes, LSW was someplace for me to go twice a week, and helped me feel like I was doing something with my life. My tutors, Robert and Cathe, helped me study for my

MATC entrance tests. Robert even went to the library to find the books.

Things continued to get better. In June I got a retail job downtown. I was so excited because it was my first real job in America.

In August I enrolled in the Optician-Vision Care program at MATC, and spent two semesters working toward my degree, with the support of my husband, family, and tutors.

### What was being a college student like?

I was so afraid that I could not do college, that I'd get an "F" and fail. But now that I see I can do it, I feel motivated. I had to try twice as hard and worked all the time. It took me forever to study one thing; first I had to translate it, and then read it again to understand it.

All the hard work paid off when I received the 2014 spring technical diploma Outstanding Student Graduate award and the 2014 Lamp of Knowledge award. Also, my instructor offered me a part-time job as an optician while I was still in school, and I've been working both jobs since.

### How did you manage these accomplishments?

The support that I have from my husband, family, and tutors helped me get where I am.

My tutors could have gone home after work and relaxed instead of coming here and dealing with me. They had to tell me the same words over and over. They just want to help me and don't expect anything from me. I came here and met some wonderful people with good hearts and won't forget this. I can't say my tutors are my friends, because they're more than friends, they are like family.

God brought me everything that's good this year, like never, ever before.

### How did you celebrate graduation?

The night of graduation we went out for dinner because all my family was in town.

Also, to continue celebrating, Ilir and I are taking a road trip to the west coast. I've never been there, and am really excited.

### What will you do next?

In August we'll move to the Chicago area so Ilir can continue his MS in Healthcare Administration. I plan to go back to college after he's done, but am not sure what for. My employer offered me a transfer, so I'll continue to work as an optician, for the time being.

I also plan on becoming a tutor so I can return this to someone else. I want to work with low level ELL students because I know what it's like to not speak much English and to be new to the US. I somehow have to repay all the help I received from my tutors.



*Lume Abduli graduating from MATC.*

**This May Lume graduated with her Optician-Vision Care degree from MATC, taking on 27 credits over 2 semesters and earning a 4.0 GPA, while working 4 days a week. In addition, Lume won awards for her outstanding academic performance, and gave the commencement speech at her graduation, which her tutors Cathe and Robert attended.**

# Thank You

# Thank You

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We are grateful to everyone who contributes to support the important work of Literacy Services. In the space below we recognize all of the donors who made gifts of support between May 1st and August 18th, 2014. It is our commitment to recognize every donor based on the donor's wishes. If your name does not appear below as you would expect, please contact Dustin Slane at 414-344-5878 so we can correct our records. Thank you on behalf of all the students who are motivated to improve their lives through education and learning at Literacy Services!

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## Fall Calendar

**Accepting New Students!** While our ABE program is close to full capacity, we do have openings for new students in our new GED program. Students can call 414-344-5878 to sign up for our Initial Assessment Sessions. These sessions are the first step in our new enrollment process for ABE and GED students.

We also have openings in our ELL (formerly ESL) program. Assessment and enrollment appointments are available two times each week. Prospective students can call to schedule an appointment.

### September

**11th – Volunteer Orientation** 8:30-9:30am  
**18th – 50th Anniversary Kick-Off Luncheon**  
 Hilton Milwaukee City Center, 11:30-1:30pm  
**23rd – Volunteer Orientation** 5:30-6:30pm

### October

**7th - Initial Assessment Session**  
**8th - Initial Assessment Session**  
**9th - Volunteer Orientation** 12:00-1:00pm  
**16th-23rd - Annual Book Sale**  
 Location TBD  
**23rd - Volunteer Orientation** 5:30-6:30pm

### November

**4th - Initial Assessment Session**  
**5th - Initial Assessment Session**  
**13th - Volunteer Orientation** 8:30-9:30am  
**27th-28th - Thanksgiving – Agency Closed**  
**25th - Volunteer Orientation** 5:30-6:30pm

### December

**9th - Initial Assessment Session**  
**10th - Initial Assessment Session**  
**11th - Volunteer Orientation** 8:30-9:30am

Visit [literacyservices.org/events](http://literacyservices.org/events) for more information about upcoming events and trainings.



## LITERACY SERVICES

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# The Syllabus

Summer 2014

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

### In this issue:

- 2014 GED Grads!
- The “Growth” of our agency
- Who is behind the front desk?
- The Student Perspective
- And much more

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**The festivities begin  
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**50th Anniversary Kick-Off Luncheon**  
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