



## Common Thread

*By: Ginger Duiven, Executive Director*

I woke up on Monday morning and I was dragging. The attacks in Paris and Beirut were on my mind. My heart felt heavy. My motivation and optimism were low. Over the next hour I slowly pushed myself forward. I coaxed myself to get on with my day when all I really wanted to do was stay covered up in bed, safe from the world. As I reflected on my own personal struggle that morning I thought about the nature of motivation, how elusive it can suddenly become. I also thought about how I seemingly tricked myself to get going anyway, and how, in doing so, I was able to leave some of the heaviness behind.

As I arrived at the office and started to greet the staff, early bird tutors, and students, I wondered what their mornings had been like. Was this a day when they, too, tricked themselves to get going? As I watched people settle in and get to work, I could truly see and feel our connectedness. I didn't see our differences that morning, despite the fact that I was surrounded by an amazingly diverse group of people. There was a woman from China next to a retiree I knew to be struggling with a health problem. There was a refugee from Sudan and a man from Iran and an immigrant from Mexico. There were my coworkers, some with personal troubles I

knew they were carrying with them. They were smiling and working to get tutors and students what they needed to get to work. There were men and women, black and white. There were young adults and elderly people. There were retired teachers and bankers and housewives and professors. There were artists and math geeks and gamers and cooks and on and on. Yet, I genuinely felt connected to each and every one there.

Often I see how disconnected from each other we have become. But on this morning

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## Celebrating Our Stories

*By: Kelly Fox, Director of Adult Basic Education*

This year all of us at Literacy Services have spent a lot of time reflecting on half a century of providing educational programs for undereducated adults in our community. The milestone of our 50th Anniversary inspired many to wonder where our former students are now and how their lives have been impacted by the time they spent with us. The idea to create a book of those stories was hatched by cultural anthropologist Joanne Passaro, who recruited journalist Linda Spice to coordinate a substantial effort to find and interview former students. With their energy and commitment, additional volunteers, including current and past board members and staff, joined in to help make this idea come to life. I got involved to help with the interviews, fact checking, and editing, and Dustin Slane took on the

role of book designer. These efforts resulted in the publication of "Unlocking Potential: Literacy Services of Wisconsin Celebrates 50 Years," an inspirational compilation of stories about perseverance, empowerment, and achievement.

To give you a taste of the stories contained in this amazing book, I am sharing the story of Dennis in this newsletter. Dennis is a former ABE student whose commitment to strengthening his foundational literacy skills helped him retain and advance his career while others around him lost their jobs. We are honored that Dennis partly attributes his success to the knowledge he attained through his studies at Literacy Services; we applaud his hard work and determination to achieve, and we congratulate him on his

see **Dennis** continued on **page 2**



*Pictured with his polo shirt featuring the original logo for Literacy Services, former student, Dennis, shares how our reading program helped advance his skills and further his career.*

# 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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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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## Dennis

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recent retirement! His story, like so many others, reminds us all how important this work is to the people we serve, to their families, and to our community. We are excited to offer "Unlocking Potential: Literacy Services of Wisconsin Celebrates 50 Years" for sale through Amazon.com. I invite you to look it over and order your copy today! We also have copies available for purchase here at our offices. Ask to see a copy the next time you are here! Please enjoy the following excerpt from "Unlocking Potential":

## DENNIS

Dennis came to Literacy Services in 1995. His co-worker was in a program at LSW, and Dennis thought it would be a good idea for him to improve his skills as his job requirements changed. "A lot of jobs want you to take classes to learn new skills," he observed, "and I figured that I needed to work on my reading and spelling so I could qualify for those classes."

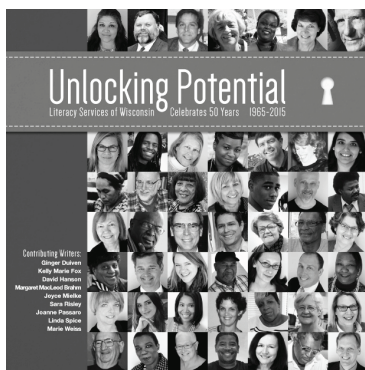
Dennis was persistent and motivated; he studied reading and spelling at LSW two or three times a week for almost nine years. His work at Literacy Services gave him the foundation he needed to take a number of job-related classes over the years. Dennis learned a variety of new skills, and became a certified welder. He kept updating his skills and learning new ones, which helped him advance in his career and also seemed to insulate him from layoffs.

"I had figured it might help with layoffs," Dennis recalled. "Those new skills kept you from getting laid off. Many times, I would keep working when other guys who were there longer than me were getting laid off."

Dennis fondly remembers working with many wonderful tutors over the course of his time at Literacy Services. He enjoyed the learning environment and appreciated being challenged to improve: "I had some great tutors! A couple of them got on me, well, not exactly, but pushed me hard in some areas where I needed it. I enjoyed that. I don't remember all of the tutors' names, but they were good people. It was fun, and I enjoyed working with them."

Dennis is now retired. He and his wife moved from Wisconsin to Arkansas in July of 2014. He looks back on a rewarding welding career and considers his studies at Literacy Services to be an important part of his success. Dennis enjoyed the learning process and continued to learn throughout the course of his working life.

"I couldn't have taken all those courses without the work I was doing on reading. I qualified for them and it made a big difference," recounted Dennis. Those courses not only resulted in his advanced certification as a welder, but in other skills that enhanced his value as an employee. "Not being laid off. That was because of all the studying I did. And I enjoyed it a lot."



## Look for our award-winning book on Amazon.com

"Unlocking Potential" won the Bronze Award in the recent Adobe Software & TechSoup design contest for non-profit organizations. Thank you to all of our friends on Facebook who helped us stand out among the other non-profits competing around the nation!







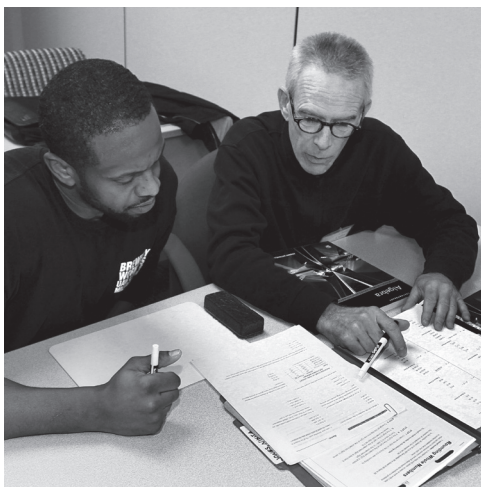
## Beyond GED

By: David Peters, GED Director

When Literacy Services of Wisconsin student Nikita Jones first enrolled in the GED program, he already had his high school diploma. So why, then, did he begin studying with us? Did he want to get another secondary school credential just for fun?

As “fun” as that might be, Nik, not surprisingly, has a different goal – to become an electrician. However, in order for him to gain entrance to the training that would ready him for a skilled trades apprenticeship, he needed to increase his ability in math. Enter LSW’s GED program. As math is one of the four GED subjects, and as we are fortunate to have many skilled math tutors, we are well positioned to apply our programmatic expertise to other community needs beyond GED acquisition. It only makes sense for us to do so. Using the skills and knowledge embedded in our GED program in additional workforce applications means the program has relevance for even more people in the community.

In order to give Nik the math boost necessary to pursue his goal, he would need a skilled guide. Enter tutor Chris Colby. Chris has been tutoring with LSW for eight years. Prior to this, he spent 30 years as a trainer, primarily with GE, designing and conducting training sessions for the use of medical equipment. A veteran of putting courses together for thousands of people, Chris says of his LSW experience, “For me this is so luxurious because I have one student at a time.” While the content of the tutoring he does at LSW certainly is at variance from that of his professional work, the fundamental approach is not so different. Doing a needs analysis of the student and emphasizing student engagement as fully and as immediately as possible are skills Chris brings which mesh seamlessly with the approach I encourage in the GED program. Through leveraging Chris’s heightened sensitivity to the learning dynamic, gained through his many years of professional



*Nik & Chris focus on mathematics.*

experience, LSW has been able to steadfastly support Nik as he pursues his goal.

Chris says of Nik’s effort, “He comes in with his family, he’s coming from his job, he’s got his overalls on... He’s a working guy and he’s really trying hard. It’s hard not to love that.”

Nik’s math skills have improved dramatically in the course of his work at LSW. He will soon test to gain entrance to apprenticeship

readiness training, which is the next step toward his goal. With the increase in his skills has come an increase in his confidence. While obviously beneficial to him in his pursuit of becoming an electrician, his preparation at LSW has led to other important residual effects. He has felt more comfortable and confident helping his children with their homework. Observes Nik, “Before, they would go straight to their mom and now they’ll come and ask me. It makes me feel good that I’m able to help them and that they feel confident enough to come up and ask me.” Additionally, Nik has noticed his increased confidence when making calculations at his job.

Of his experience at LSW, Nik says, “It’s like a family. You get a warm feeling when you get here. You know everybody and everybody knows you. Like ‘Cheers,’” he laughs, “everybody knows your name.” Of his tutor, Chris, Nik says, “He pushes you. He sees if you’re struggling. He’s patient. He encourages me... I’ve learned a lot from him.” Speaking more broadly Nik adds, “I still have a lot of work to do, but I’ve come a long way.”



*Nikita’s work at LSW has allowed him a new way to engage with his children. Now, before dinner they often do homework together.*



## Thread

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I could see and feel how each person was connected to me and to each other by our common struggles as humans. To persist and carry on, to push back our fears, to take our focus off of our heavy hearts and get out of bed anyway; to find our optimism that things can get better and that we can do something about it ourselves was the common thread that felt so real and true. It made me feel stronger and more optimistic to notice this thread; I was not alone. I could see that morning that all the people around us are not as different from us as they sometimes might appear. And not only that, they did not seem scary, they seemed just like me.

Where am I going with this you might want to know? Well my optimism has not only returned but my heart is full. I can see how this place, Literacy Services of Wisconsin, is so much more than the sum of its tutoring sessions and GEDs, student progress and citizenships received. It is a place that transcends differences to build genuine connections and understanding between seemingly “different” people. Our common bonds emerge, new solutions are found, we are vulnerable together and through it we find strength. It might just be an antidote to fear, terror, despair, and hate.

Far fetched?  
I don't think so.



## Persistence

By: Julie Clark, Director of English Language Learning

I am often amazed by the students who come to Literacy Services. I'm struck by a variety of qualities: dedication, humility, humor, curiosity. Mostly, I'm struck by how hard they work. The successful students make gains, increase their literacy levels, and achieve all kinds of accomplishments. When things get challenging, those students work harder. When things get difficult, they work harder. They try harder. A quality they possess is persistence. Persistence enables them to keep trying, even when they are not successful. When they fail, persistence makes them try again. The student that I chose to write about for this issue of the newsletter has shown more persistence than anyone I have ever met in my life. I'd like to share her story, but I need to give a little background information first.

Some of the students who come to our English Language Learning program ask for help in preparing for the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) test. The TOEFL is a challenging exam for international students who want to enter a university in the United States. Students are tested in reading and comprehension, in writing, in speaking and in listening. They have to prove through the TOEFL test that they have the English skills necessary to manage university level classes. It's a tough exam.

*Below: Myunghee shares her personal experience at our 3rd Quarter Awards Celebration.*

The student I'm writing about, Myunghee Jun, knows success, but she also knows failure. She has tried for years to pass the TOEFL test. Her first attempts occurred long before she found Literacy Services. Myunghee Jun is not only a registered nurse in her home country of South Korea, she has a doctorate in nursing and has taught at the university level there for several years. When she came to the United States, she took the TOEFL test and failed. She studied some more and tried again. She failed it again. She kept trying, and she kept testing, and she kept failing. She took the TOEFL test nine times.

At the end of September, Myunghee walked into our classroom and told us she passed the TOEFL test on her tenth attempt. Then she told me how grateful she was to Literacy Services. She told me, person by person, how each of her tutors had helped her, how each one very specifically worked in different ways with her to approach that test. She told me what we did for her.

I'm going to tell you what she does for us. Myunghee inspires us: her tenacity, her persistence, her hope. She gives hope to all of us. She keeps us going. I am very honored that I have been able to witness her success. Moreover, I'm grateful that I can be inspired by someone who has such incredible strength and persistence.





# Thank You!

In the space below we recognize all of the donors who made gifts of support between August 12th and November 18th, 2015. 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 Michaela by phone at 414-344-5878, or via email at [michaela@literacyservices.org](mailto:michaela@literacyservices.org).



*We couldn't celebrate our fiftieth anniversary without celebrating the people and organizations that provided the funding and leadership for our agency to grow and flourish. Above (from left) founder and former Board President, **Gordon Ralph**; **Lori Hanes**, Northwestern Mutual; former Board Member, **Bob Sproat**; **Roger Smith**, A. O. Smith; former Board Member, **Jack Brahm**; **Kim Metcalf-Kupres**, Johnson Controls; **Mark Short**, JPMorgan Chase; **Gigi Short**, Service Club of Milwaukee; former Board Member, **Dan Madigan**; **Robert Kennedy**, We Energies; and former Board President, **Harry Drake**. Our Key-Maker Awards were presented by former board members to representatives of our award winners in honor of their organizations' visionary philanthropy. The winners are Northwestern Mutual for support since 1965, A. O. Smith since 1975, Johnson Controls since 1975, JPMorgan Chase since 1976, Service Club of Milwaukee since 1976, We Energies since 1978 and Brady Corporation for leadership in building the endowment fund.*

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Literacy Services has thrived for 50 years, in part, thanks to generous donors who have remembered LSW in their wills. Gifts of appreciated stock and gifts of 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!

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. Give a gift from our wish list below.

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- Dry Erase Markers
- Copy Paper
- Paper Towels & Facial Tissue
- Dish Soap & Hand Sanitizer
- Disinfectant Wipes & Spray
- Hanging File Folders (Letter)
- Box-Bottom Hanging File Folders (Letter)
- Pocket File Folders

Call **Robin** or **Becky** at **414-344-5878**  
**before arriving with durable goods.**



## Calendar Bookmarks

### Student Enrollment

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

### December

**2nd - Volunteer Orientation** 5:30-6:30pm

**10th - Volunteer Orientation** Noon-1:00pm

**15th - Boswell Gift Wrapping** 10:00am-3:00pm

**16th - Boswell Gift Wrapping** 3:00pm-8:00pm

### Winter Break

**Closed/No Classes** - Monday, December

21st - Friday, January 1st (New Year's Day)

Classes will resume on Monday, January 4th

### January

**6th - Volunteer Orientation** 9:30-10:30am

**14th - Volunteer Orientation** Noon-1:00pm

**18th - No Classes** Martin Luther King Jr. Day

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

### February

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

**11th - Volunteer Orientation** Noon-1:00pm

**12th - Save the Date!**

Volunteer Appreciation Party

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

### Save The Date

**Literacy Services Annual Luncheon**

**Thursday, June 9th**

Visit [literacyservices.org/events](http://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](mailto:dustin@literacyservices.org) or call us at **414-344-5878**.

## Upcoming Events

### Boswell Book Company Holiday Gift Wrapping

**Tuesday, December 15th** from 10:00am-3:00pm

**Wednesday, December 16th** from 3:00pm-8:00pm

Volunteers from Literacy Services will be providing complimentary gift wrapping at Boswell Books Company a few days this holiday season. Come and see us! And if you happen to be giving a literary gift, we will happily wrap it for you. Hope to see you there! Email [michaela@literacyservices.org](mailto:michaela@literacyservices.org) if you are interested in joining this unique volunteer opportunity.

Joyous Peaceful  
Kwanzaa Yule Pancha Ganapati  
Merry Christmas Bright  
Mawlid Happy Hanukkah  
al-Nabi Mubarak New Year  
Bodhi Day Las Posadas

The staff & board of  
Literacy Services wish you and  
your family all of the joys of the season!

### 2015 Board of Directors

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**Joshua Palleon**, *Treasurer*, BMO Private Bank

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### Weather Closings

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

Follow local media announcements for weather related closings. Literacy Services will close for weather if the Milwaukee Public School system cancels classes for excessive snow or cold temperatures.