

# Syl·la·bus Winter 2017



# Careers Are Taking Off!

By: Ginger Duiven, Executive Director

What if you got to the airport and there were no signs marking the destinations of each plane? What if you just had to get on one and hope for the best?

I think this is what it can feel like when you are ready to change your life. You've mustered your gumption, you're ready, you've packed your bags full of expectations and hopes. You gather your strength, your motivation is high, and you get yourself to the airport of life. Then you pick the plane which seems like it will take you where you want to go. You want to get on the plane that will take you to the place where you will have a job you like, that pays you well so you can provide for yourself and your family; a job you can do well and feel good about yourself. But how do you choose the right plane when things are always changing and the signs are not clear?

My metaphor of the airport of life and picking the right plane is my way of introducing you to the concept of "Career Pathways." This proven approach to helping adults move from adult basic education to sustainable employment in our modern economy is spreading across the country and across Wisconsin, too. These Pathways align adult basic education with workforce and academic programs to address the fact that the previous separation between these essential functions has failed to promote economic and academic advancement for disadvantaged students.

Recent research has taught us that people perform better in adult education and training when the skill building is integrated,



concurrent, and leads to a clear outcome. To lean further on my metaphor, the plane they board has a clearly marked destination, a timeline for arrival, and a compelling, true description of the destination and the cost of getting there. Pathways even detail the "connecting flights," or additional credentials or training you will need to arrive at your dream destination.

Our adult students start their paths at Literacy Services. LSW may provide more than just the first step on their chosen pathway depending on their needs. For example, they may begin by improving basic English literacy skills; learning to write, read, and master math concepts; or beginning an integrated High School-Equivalency Diploma (HSED) program while also taking their first college courses identified in their chosen pathway. They may also earn an industry-recognized credential, like the one our constructionbased HSED program provides. This is really important because we know that by 2018, 63% of jobs will require some

post-secondary education. (Carnevale, Swish & Strohl, 2010) They are going to need college-level knowledge and skills, they are going to need specialized training, and they are going to need digital literacy combined with critical thinking skills.

This issue of the Syllabus is dedicated to stories about students and their pathways. Inside you will read about paths through our programs at LSW and the seamless, integrated, concurrent pathways to college or industry training programs we have been building with some great partners. It's not enough in our rapidly changing world to provide for basic skills alone. It is essential that we serve as a hub to the actual destinations that lead to better lives for adult students. We have the evidence that tells us that the planes leaving our airport will land at the destinations our students want to be: the land of a better life. I invite you to come with us on this journey; read on, join us as a volunteer and a supporter. Help us make sure we have enough crew and fuel for these journeys!

# Syl·la·bus

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

The Syllabus is the quarterly newsletter of Literacy Services of Wisconsin, the merged 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, 5.09 High School Equivalent Diploma (HSED), English Language Learning (ELL), Workforce Training and Career Pathway Bridges and integrated and personalized Functional Literacy instruction.

Literacy Services of Wisconsin is grateful for the broad support of our community, including over 500 volunteers and financial support from 1000 individuals; 196 foundations, corporations and organizations; The United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County; and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. We are grateful for our partnerships with ResCare and Milwaukee Public Schools.

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# In Good Company

By: Kelly Fox, ABE Program Director - Downtown

On December 19, 2017, Tamika walked across the stage at MATC's citywide Commencement Ceremony and received her diploma. Her whole family, consisting of her mother, her four sisters, and her five-year-old son and his father, beamed with pride as they cheered her success from their floor seats in Cooley Auditorium. Following the ceremony, Tamika shared hugs with her classmates and together they celebrated their accomplishments.

Not very long ago, Tamika wasn't sure if she would ever earn her secondary, or high school-equivalent, credential. She was employed as a home healthcare worker and was the sole provider for her young son. One day, Tamika's best friend since the sixth grade, Shenisha, made the decision to pursue her own diploma and convinced Tamika to embark upon that journey with her. Tired of working what she deemed "dead-end jobs," Tamika agreed to enroll in an adult education program. The first organization the young women attended wasn't a great fit for their needs, and the second school they tried was an even worse experience for each of them. Dejected and disappointed in herself, Tamika withdrew from school. But the knowledge that she would need her diploma if she ever hoped to improve her employment options weighed heavily on her.

Meanwhile, Shenisha found Literacy
Services of Wisconsin (LSW) and enrolled as
a student in the Adult Basic Education (ABE)
program in the summer of 2016. After
quickly completing ABE and transitioning to
the GED program, Shenisha raved about the
quality of her LSW experience to Tamika and
convinced her to enroll. Based on
Shenisha's praise, Tamika believed that LSW
would help her reach her goal. She quit her
job so she could focus entirely on school,
enrolled at LSW in October, and transitioned



Tamika's hard work paid off!

Her future is as bright as her smile.

to GED within six weeks of enrollment.

Reunited in LSW's GED program, Tamika and Shenisha worked tirelessly and fueled each other with incredible energy, support, and good humor.

Tamika began 2017 with the singular goal of earning her diploma. However, the first half of this year did not favor either of the women. For Tamika, it was filled with tragedy, loss, and a lengthy personal illness. Despite those setbacks, Tamika faithfully attended her class sessions, but the realization that the GED takes some students years to complete left her feeling deflated and hopeless; once again her motivation began to waver.

However, Shenisha and Program

Coordinator Mai Lee would not allow Tamika
to descend into self-defeat. Each morning,
Shenisha would call her and say, "Friend,
get up. You have to go to school." And every

day, Mai would smile at Tamika and declare, "You're going to get this!" Tamika credits their encouragement and support as a major contributor to her motivation. "It was so good," she says, "to have people who believe in me, when so many others tried to hold me back."

In August, Mai helped them both get accepted into LSW's 16-week High School-Equivalency Diploma (HSED) program. Suddenly, that elusive credential seemed within reach, and Tamika's determination and resolve became stronger than ever.

In the HSED program, Tamika and Shenisha drew strength and encouragement from Program Director Carol Josten and their classmates. Tamika described her classmates as friends from whom she had learned so much. The whole class bonded and kept one another motivated; at the end of each class day, they would say to each other, "I'm going to see you tomorrow, right?" and "You better come tomorrow." But, Tamika says, throughout the 16-week program, "there was never a day I didn't

want to go." She is so proud of the skills she has acquired, specifically in math, typing, and public speaking. In reflecting on all she has learned, Tamika says, "Now I just want to learn more. Like, what's next?"

Tamika reached her goal, but her story of success doesn't end with her earning her diploma. She has already met with financial aid counselors and is registered for spring classes at MATC – prerequisite courses towards her next goal of enrolling in culinary school. Her journey – like that of so many of our adult learners – has been a winding tale of determination and setbacks. Tamika's success is a result of her perseverance and fortitude, a true friend whose encouragement was unrelenting, and finding the right program to help her achieve her goal.

On behalf of all the LSW staff, we are honored to have played a role in so many journeys like Tamika's, and we congratulate the 2017 graduates!

Hugs between friends punctuate the journey they shared together to reach their independent goals.



# Tiny Updates, Big News

**Deborah** met the reading, math and language requirements for enrollment in the HSED program!

LSW GED grads, **Saw** and **Pau**, started college at MATC!

**Brandon**, **David**, and **Dimetris** passed their math tests and entered pre-apprenticeship readiness preparation at WRTP/BIG STEP!

**Steven** met the arithmetic requirement for the Plumbers Union!

**Daniel** became the superintendent at his apartment building.

**Darryn** got a promotion at work.

**James** has written a 15-page memoir about his father.

**Theresa** has created flashcards to help her kids.

**Todd** is able to fill out medical forms on his own.

**Latasha** now owns a rental property.

**Ramon** scored 100% on his last two vocabulary quizzes.

**Malcolm** finished a book about Mohammed Ali.

**Gina** can add and subtract four-digit numbers.

**Esmeralda** is now able to multiply and divide without using a times-table chart.

Keep up the good work, everyone!



## Career Pathways to a Better Future

By: Holly McCoy, Senior Director of Programs

There has been a lot of experimenting in adult basic education and technical education over the last 15 years, trying to figure out how to improve and speed up the outcomes for adult learners. The results of this work have led to a new understanding about the power of integrating adult education programs like LSW's with relevant career training programs and support services. We now have the evidence that shows this integration creates more effective ways for people, especially those who are most disconnected or disadvantaged, to gain or advance in employment. This concept of integrating education, training, and support services is now commonly called "Career Pathways." Private and public education and workforce systems across Milwaukee, the state of Wisconsin, and the country are being reshaped to implement programs based on this now proven, integrated approach.

LSW has been partnering with MATC since 2016 to offer a Career Pathway High School-Equivalency Diploma (HSED) program. (I know, that's a mouthful!) This program provides students with a way of earning a high school credential by completing high school-level coursework while being concurrently enrolled in college classes geared toward a certain occupation. We piloted our program for two semesters, and officially launched this past fall with two Career Pathway options: Healthcare Customer Service and Administrative Professional.

LSW's Career Pathway HSED program has several goals. The primary goal is to involve the adult learner in creating an action plan naming the steps they will take after earning their diploma (i.e. taking the entrance exam for MATC, talking with a trade union, applying for multiple jobs within a field of interest, etc.). From the research, and

common sense, we know that we need to be able to see the steps towards a goal and that our plans are achievable. Helping adults to see the path to their career or higher education goals help increase their motivation and commitment levels.

MATC'S website does a good job of explaining further; "Career Pathways offer new ways to achieve your education goals. Instead of studying just one program, the Career Pathway model links related academic programs in a sequence. Each program offers direct job preparation AND a path to the next higher academic program."

Career Pathways have become a way to bridge unemployed and underemployed adults lacking a high school diploma to career options in high demand fields and set them up for success. Combining LSW's competency-based program focused on high school-level education with MATC's Career Pathways is accelerating people's progress towards their goals. LSW's HSED program is valuable on its own, but combined with a Career Pathway approach it becomes an even stronger vehicle for educational, social, and economic development.

LSW's classes take place at MATC's Walker's Square campus on National Avenue. The students are enrolled in their college courses in the morning and our Literacy Services HSED instructor takes over in the afternoon.



Upon completion of the semester, students not only receive their high school credential, but also their first 5-7 college credits!

Students only need to complete one more semester to earn a certificate in their selected Career Pathway. After they earn their certificate, they can petition the college to enter one of the Career Pathway options associated with their certificate and earn either a Technical Diploma or Associate's Degree in as little as one year.

This model creates an engaging hands-on approach to learning. But don't take it from me; take it from Cynthia, who says,

"The program convinced me that I have the potential to go all the way. I have a great support system here, which includes my teachers, Mr. Steve and Ms. Melanie, and classmates. I've never had anyone else believe in me the way they do. They've become my family, and I encourage them as much as they encourage me. I enrolled in the Career Pathways program, so along with getting my HSED, I also earned college credit in **Medical Terminology and English** 151. I'm proud to say I finished both classes with A's. I learned so much during my time. I've became better at both math and writing essays. The program at **Literacy Services truly changed** my life. My plans for the future are to continue going to MATC to become a registered nurse to help families in need. I love working with adults and children and see a lifetime career in nursing!"



## Applying Heat & Pressure

By: Julie Clark, ELL Program Director - Downtown

Misael enrolled in our English Language Learning (ELL) program with minimal English skills, while he waited for his work permit. He soon became a fixture in the program, coming in four or five times a week. He improved rapidly and when he obtained his permit and a full time job, his newly acquired English skills enabled him to excel in it. The job took him away from the ELL program, but did not prevent him from pursuing his goals.

Misael enrolled in a welding program through MATC that required him to attend welding classes every day from 7:30am to 12:30pm. After that morning session, he would take a bus to the furniture store where he worked full time from 1:00pm to 10:00 at night. Immediately upon completing the welding course, Misael was offered a job as a welder!

Though he had graduated from high school in the Dominican Republic, he did not have the acceptable credential for a U.S. recognized high school degree. To fill this gap, he chose to pursue the GED in English, his newly acquired language. We were excited to welcome him back to LSW to continue his studies while he kept working full time as a welder. His success came swiftly due to his hard work, consistent attendance, and positive, confident attitude.

Take a moment to consider the work of a welder. The simplest definition I could find described welding as using heat and pressure, generally with metals or thermoplastics, to cause fusion. It is a dangerous job requiring careful skill. If you look around downtown Milwaukee right now and take note of the massive amount of construction that is happening, you can realize the importance of welding which creates the scaffolds, the basic structures, on which all the construction depends. I like

the idea that Misael is doing that as his work. He makes an impression on everything and everyone he meets. He brings energy and fire, he brings hard work and force, and he brings a strong dedication to everything he does here in Milwaukee.

In preparation for this article, I spoke with several of Misael's tutors. Jim was effusive in his praise of Misael as a hard-working student. He said he was delightful and down to earth. Sara described him as "the most personable student" she has worked with. She recalled that after Misael passed his math test to complete his GED, he showed up the next day to begin preparation for college entrance exams. She described him as tenacious, ambitious, and determined.

At the end of my interview with Misael, I told him that I see over one hundred students each week. I asked him to tell me his secret of success so that I might share it with others. What could I tell my students to encourage them, to help them succeed? Without a moment's hesitation he said, "Dedication, commitment, and sacrifice." It is his mantra. He was told that by a welding instructor and has never forgotten it. Perhaps that is why everyone I spoke with talked about the impression Misael made on them. They taught him, and he changed them. I've never been able to adequately express how our tutors are transformed by the work they do here with students like Misael. The act of teaching and guiding others transforms us, too.

I keep thinking of welding; heat and pressure causing fusion. This is not easy work we do, but through it we are changed, and I can see through the eyes of Misael, we are changing our little corner of the world here in Milwaukee.



Miseal with Julie Clark at the Spring Honors Celebration in 2015, exchanging the first of many award certificates he would receive while learning the English language and earning his GED.

## Thank You!

In the space below we recognize all of the donors who made gifts or pledged support between July 22 and November 30, 2017. All the donors listed serve as conduits for empowering adult students to read and write their way to a better future. We promise to put your gifts to good work! 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.

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- Gifts of cash
- Online one-time or recurring donations through our website
- In-kind gifts such as furniture, books, or office supplies (check out the wish list on our website for current needs)
- Employer matching programs

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### In this issue of The Syllabus:

- · Paths to careers start in the classroom
- Friends travel from ABE through HSED
- · Welder tests his mettle in GED & ELL
- · Much more!





## 2018 Inspiration Awards & Fundraising Dinner

# Save the date! Tuesday, May 15, 2018

New location: The Garage at the Harley-Davidson Museum®

Please mark your calendar to join us! Formal invitation to follow. Sponsorship and underwriting opportunities are available now. Contact Chad Knezel to learn more about supporting our event. Call **414-344-5878** or email **chad@literacyservices.org**.

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**No Classes** - December 22nd - January 5th Classes resume on Monday, January 8th

#### January

4th - Volunteer Orientation 9:30-10:30am

15th - Agency Closed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

17th - Volunteer Orientation 5:30-6:30pm

30th - Volunteer Orientation Noon-1:00pm

#### February

8th - Volunteer Orientation 9:30-10:30am

21st - Volunteer Orientation 5:30-6:30pm

#### March

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21st - Volunteer Orientation 5:30-6:30pm

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