



## Hidden Forces

By: *Ginger Duiven, Executive Director*

We put so much weight in facts and data. We want information and evidence before we make decisions. Researchers try to determine the cause of all kinds of situations in our modern world. They try to figure out, what makes a person succeed? What makes it possible for someone to achieve the American Dream? What causes someone to give of their resources or time? We learn a lot about the things we seek to understand through research and data, but do we ever really know all the facts that create the outcomes we observe?

I wonder how the often hidden force of “paying it forward” is a determining factor in the outcomes we observe. Investment and support at just the right time; sometimes a singular moment of opportunity in a person’s life can forever change their future. Surely that was true for me.

**Here are a few examples of what I am talking about from my life.**

**There was the time when I was in college when my father had a disabling stroke.** My family was devastated. After I picked up the pieces and found a way to finish college, my best friend invited me to move to New York City with her to get a fresh start.

Outcome: I got a job with a start-up magazine and found my way into a career and a circle of people who helped me recover from my family trauma.

**There was the time when my door was kicked in and my apartment robbed.** I wasn’t comfortable living there anymore but



*Pictured from left to right:*

*Eric Christophersen, Northwestern Mutual Foundation President; Holly McCoy, LSW Senior Director of Programs; Jacob Walton of WRTP/BIG STEP; Ginger Duiven, LSW Executive Director; and Leslie Spencer-Herrera, Laura Heller, and Matt Waltz of WRTP/BIG STEP.*

## Breaking News! MANDI Award Winners!

Thank you **LISC Milwaukee** (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) and **Northwestern Mutual** for your new **MANDI Collaboration Award** for our Construction High School Equivalency Diploma Program partnership with **WRTP/BIG STEP**! Learn more about our partnership by watching the video on the homepage of [www.literacyservices.org](http://www.literacyservices.org).

couldn’t afford a new apartment. A friend and her husband invited me to move in with them until I could save up some money and find a new place.

Outcome: I recovered from the trauma of having my home broken into and avoided a financial setback that could have taken years to recover from at my low income level.

**There was the time I told a friend about my goal to earn a master’s degree before I turned “a certain age”.** She made it her job to help me research programs and costs, and made sure I applied in time to attain this

seemingly impossible goal. I am certain it would have never happened without this friend’s support.

Outcome: I was able to earn a valuable credential and advance my knowledge and confidence in support of my career goals. There were countless times when people invested their time or resources in me as I continued to grow, learn, and work hard to build a life and achieve my dreams. Some of these were acts of kindness and some were acts of “paying it forward”. The friend who helped me go to grad school specifically said she was doing this because someone had

# The Sylla·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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## Volunteer 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, 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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## Revealing Success

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helped her in a similar way. I think it's these kinds of hidden stories that may never be uncovered by researchers on graduate school success rates, home ownership rates, career trajectories, or on how to develop resilience or heal from trauma. None of these life turning-points on my journey to living the American Dream are obvious to the common observer or even a researcher. I could never repay these people for the meaningful, important, just right, and just-in-time ways they helped me. But what I can do, and what I aim to do as many times as I can, is provide other people with the same kind of help, investment, and resources that they need to build their lives.

### And so it is for organizations, too.

There was the time when Jane Bradley Pettit said to then LSW Board Member Judy Harding in October 1990, "You need more room because this is so important!"

Outcome: What followed was the single largest donation ever given to Literacy Services of Wisconsin to create what was known as the Laubach Center, our home for 20 years on 27th and Wells.

### And so it is for our adult students, too.

There was the time when Charles was planning to quit our GED program and David kept calling him and encouraging him to continue.

Outcome: Charles earned his GED, started college, and is leading a youth development organization called "The Milwaukee Flyers."

There was the time when Vernon didn't have the money to buy a bus ticket, but Gordana

and Milan Racic's Transportation Fund made it possible for him to come to class.

Outcome: Vernon has successfully completed the Adult Basic Education program at our Downtown Center and is now enrolled in a HSED program at our Layton Center.

You get the idea, but please allow me one more example. The latest act of kindness being repaid by paying it forward has to do with that wonderful gift made to our city by Mrs. Pettit, The Bradley Center. This cultural center has been the home of first concerts, family nights out at the Bucks game, marriage proposals, and countless memorable and life changing moments in the lives of Wisconsinites. The BMO Harris Bradley Center is in the final months of its final season. The Bradley Center board and staff have decided to attempt to pay Mrs. Pettit's incredible gift forward. Here's what the board chairman said in announcing their plans:

"The BMO Harris Bradley Center was a gift to the people of Wisconsin by one of its most beloved citizens, and for 30 years, our mission has been rooted in the spirit of civic service that Mrs. Pettit lived every day of her life," said Ted Kellner, the Center's board chairman. "As the Center embarks on its final season, we are delighted to continue to pay her incredible gift forward by supporting the causes that were important to her and these 16 fine organizations that continue to do impactful and transformative work that makes our community better."

Thank you, Mrs. Pettit, for your amazing, life-changing gifts to our community. We will keep working hard to "pay it forward" for as long as our doors are open.

**Have you received help along the way?** Would you like to pay it forward and support an adult on their journey here at LSW? Click the donate button to pay it forward today.

 **Donate**





## You're in the Right Place

By: Kelly Fox, ABE Program Director – Downtown

Some time ago, a young man called to inquire about the programs offered at Literacy Services' downtown location. He told our representative that he wanted to learn to read, so she penciled him in for the next initial assessment session. He was apprehensive but hopeful; he showed up early for the appointment and was clearly nervous. He wasn't able to complete the enrollment form on his own and although he was told that was okay, he seemed shaken and anxious.

When the assessment session began, the young man took a long look at the test and his anxiety got the best of him. Without answering a single question, he set the papers neatly aside, grabbed his possessions, and made his way for the exit.

In the lobby, Robin Brisco – who runs the assessment sessions and is affectionately known as our “office mom” – stopped the young man and asked if he was all right. He shook his head, so Robin asked him to come to her office to talk.

Behind her closed door, the young man explained to Robin that he couldn't read any of the test questions. He began to apologize for wasting her time, but Robin stopped him. She tried to assure him that it was OK, that we could still help him. The young man told her that he had been to many schools for adults, and been turned away from most. The organizations that had given him a chance eventually dismissed him because, as he put it, he “couldn't learn.” All his teachers and tutors had given up on him, he said, because he just wasn't capable of learning.

Robin put her hand gently on his, smiled her warm smile, and said to him, “Well, you're in the right place now.”

That young man, like so many adult learners before him, decided at that moment to make



*For nearly nineteen years, Robin Brisco has warmly welcomed students and volunteers to LSW.*

a wager: On Literacy Services, on our Adult Basic Education (ABE) program, and – most importantly – on himself.

The young man was enrolled in the intensive-remediation phonics program in ABE, and he worked his tail off for more than three years, facing down frustrations and overcoming life obstacles, to reach his goals. On occasions when his tutoring session was particularly challenging, he would stop in at Robin's office to vent. She remained his faithful supporter, always quick to praise his efforts and deliver the motivational speech he needed to hear. His tutors, too, kept him on track with their positive energy and devotion to his success.

As he progressed through the program and his literacy skills began to blossom, the young man took an active role in his young daughter's education. He had noticed her trouble with recognizing the letters of the alphabet, so he called her kindergarten teacher for a conference. Because of his advocacy, the teacher referred her for testing; her learning disability was discovered early, and plans were set in motion to provide her

with the extra support she would need to succeed in reading going forward.

For that young man, like so many adult learners before him, his wager paid off. He didn't just learn to read; he learned that investing in himself and putting in the work to reach his goals was worth it. He learned that he was worth our investment.

To see him today, diligently working to build his vocabulary, comprehension, and language skills in pursuit of acceptance into our High School-Equivalent Diploma program, one would never suspect that this is the same young man who nearly gave up on himself some years ago. Determined and focused, he has developed into a confident, poised student. It's not unusual to overhear him offering supportive words to other struggling students.

When I witness those moments from him, I have to take a deep breath and whisper my thanks to Robin for catching him that first day. He very nearly slipped away from us, from our community, and from himself. I am so grateful that Robin convinced him that he was truly in the right place.



## Team Up for Better Employment

By: Holly McCoy, Senior Director of Programs

Although the unemployment rate in Wisconsin is at a record low, underemployment continues to be a negative factor hindering the generation of higher median wages throughout the state. For this reason, the adult education services provided by LSW are just as important as ever. We know that the academic improvements we help to facilitate change lives and improve employment outcomes. Sustaining or advancing in employment is the focus in times like these. Access to resources designed to address the many barriers that our students face can help achieve sustained employment, a promotion, or land a better job.

For the past three years, ResCare Workforce Services has been a program partner of Milwaukee Achiever, now a welcomed part of LSW thanks to our merger last year. This important partnership has blossomed to include supportive services for adult learners at three LSW locations around Milwaukee. These services, part of the state's FSET, or FoodShare Employment and Training program, are administered by ResCare to offer education and job training to participants who are receiving FoodShare benefits, with the goal of connecting them to new employment opportunities. Milwaukee has 183,345 adults who qualified for and received FoodShare benefits in 2017. With the addition of a FoodShare work requirement in April 2015, FSET has become an increasingly important aspect of the program, where Wisconsin adults continue to receive benefits while gaining the skills essential for family-sustaining careers and wages.

Last year, LSW provided educational services to 233 FSET participants through our ResCare partnership. These students took part in one-on-one tutoring or group classes across all program areas. Their

success in achieving skill gains or high school credentials attests to the value of this partnership. At LSW, we are committed to building meaningful relationships with our students while helping them improve academically. ResCare allows us to expand our impact on students' lives by giving them direct access to solutions to many of the barriers they face. LSW students participating in FSET gain access to the support they need, like free bus passes, child care assistance, waived training fees, job skills assessments, work experience, background checks, criminal record expungement, driver's license recovery, commercial driver's licensing, work uniforms, employer-required immunizations, and a number of other community resources. In this partnership model, the adult education services that LSW provides are recognized as a fundamental part of workforce development. When the resources available to unemployed and underemployed adults through FSET are combined with the life-changing power of adult education, the result is a stronger workforce and improved academic prospects for those in need. It is a formula that proves what is possible when students

are given the necessary support services and the opportunity to work toward a goal.

Angela, a recent ResCare HSED graduate, said, "I am, first and foremost, a mother of two beautiful children. Although they never looked at me as an uneducated mom, I saw myself as one, and I wanted more than that from this life. God gave me strength to go back to school and show my kids that things are possible. On the first day I heard everyone [in class] share their story and pain, but it was bittersweet to know that we were taking this step together. My teacher, Mr. Steve, shared his story and it reminded me that if he can do it, so can I. My next step is getting my CNA certification." Angela will complete her Healthcare Customer Service certificate this spring.

LSW's continued commitment to quality education and ResCare's commitment to breaking down barriers are helping our students achieve their dreams. With so much success so far, think about what more our students can accomplish when such effective partnerships are in place.



Four students with brighter futures thanks to our partnership with ResCare.

# Tiny Updates, Big News

- David** changed his own furnace by reading instructions and saved over \$300.
- Theresa** designed and built a website for her hair styling business.
- Patricia** now leads a Bible study group and a Sunday School class at her church.
- Hilaria** became a U.S. citizen.
- Yannick** has been accepted into UWM.
- Esperanza** learned the order of adjectives.
- Pah** and his tutor **Carol** visited the library so he could get a library card.
- Saul & Linda** both got jobs.
- Pamela** has perfect attendance this semester.
- Dongshen**, a former ELL student, communicated that he was able to attain his dream job in Silicon Valley.
- Zina** passed her citizenship test.
- James** improved his math and gained entrance to pre-apprenticeship readiness preparation for the construction industry at W RTP/BIG STEP. He is targeting a career in Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC).
- Janeita** completed her GED and is in a training program for a career in the health care field.
- Andrea** completed her GED and is preparing to enroll at MATC.
- Iyana** completed her GED and is preparing for post-secondary education in health care.

Keep up the good work!

## Progress Report

This is the issue of our newsletter when we would usually provide you with a report card from the previous year. Since we altered our fiscal year from a calendar year to a June 30 schedule, in alignment with our merger with Milwaukee Achiever on July 1, 2017, we are now tracking our data on this new schedule. Look for our report card for our first full fiscal year as a merged team to come out in the fall issue of the Syllabus.

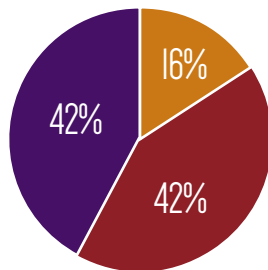
Our strategic plan goal #2 is “**Define and measure our impact on our mission.**” We have been measuring our impact all along the way. With the changes in the adult education field and the changes to our program mix as a result of the merger, the strategic planning process surfaced the need to step back and review how we measure our impact. Holly McCoy, Senior Director of Programs, and Board Member David Pritchard are leading a process to tackle goal #2 for 2018 and beyond.

To give a progress report to tide you over until then, here are data for the 8 months through February 2018. To give context, we’re providing the last full year of LSW data available from 2016.

### Calendar 2016 at downtown location:



442 Enrolled Students



- Adult Basic Education Learners
- Adult Secondary Education Learners
- English Language Learners



0 High School  
Equivalency Diplomas

6 GED completions



90% of GED subject  
matter tests were passed  
on the first attempt

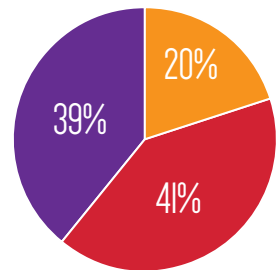


358 Volunteer Tutors

### Last 8 months at our 8 locations:



1091 Enrolled Students



- Adult Basic Education Learners
- Adult Secondary Education Learners
- English Language Learners



51 High School  
Equivalency Diplomas

4 GED completions



90% of GED subject  
matter tests were passed  
on the first attempt



449 Volunteer Tutors



## Thank You!

In the space below we recognize all of the donors who made gifts or pledged support between December 1, 2017 and February 15, 2018. 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](mailto:chad@literacyservices.org).



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## Memorials & Tributes

In tribute to David Ball

- Kristin Hill

In tribute to Jessica Obenauf

- Christopher Becher

In honor of David Baldwin

- Shauna Baldwin

In honor of Ken Chelmowski

- Mark & Terri Chelmowski

In honor of Frank Clines

- Kate Dreher

In honor of Bob Jacobson & Barb Delaney

- Jim Jacobson

In honor of Mary Jones

- Andrew & Amy Jones

In honor of Judy Jorgensen

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- Grace Liebenstein

In honor of Holly McCoy

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In honor of Shawn Quinn

- Bernadine Williamsen

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- Elaine McCarthy, Kerry Risley &

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In honor of Susan Robertson

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- Herbert Heneman, Kelly Herbold, Carol

Martin, Judy Rogers, and Chris Weida

In memory of Ankita Pradhan

- Sunil & Anita Pradhan

In memory of Maryalice & Robert R. Rasmussen

- Rob L. Rasmussen

In memory of Bernice Strenn

- Joyce De Cleene

In memory of Paul Utschig

- Mary C. Utschig

In memory of Henry J. Wright

- James & Judith Callan

## Enduring Memories & Legacies



Judy McNamara

Volunteer Tutor

By: David Peters

ASE Program Director – Downtown



My first memory of Judy McNamara was her asking me, "How long are you going to be here?" I was just a week into my new position as Literacy Services' GED program director. There had been turn over and I was the fourth director in a twelve-month period. While I attempted to reassure her that I intended to stay, the skepticism in her voice helped me understand how students and tutors in the program had been wounded through the neglect of that time. That was seven years ago. That interaction with Judy caused me to steel my resolve not just to provide consistent and relevant programming, but to provide it in such a way that let people know that they were cared about and that they mattered.

In October of last year, Judy withdrew from tutoring for health reasons and on January 24, 2018, she passed away. Our Tuesday morning sessions are missing her sense of humor and her admiration for the students with whom she worked. Judy was a member of our GED program family and our Literacy Services community. She extended herself to people she didn't know to try to make their lives a little better. She discovered that doing so made her life better too. In one of her last emails to me she confided that tutoring was the best thing she had done in recent years.

Seven years later, my first interaction with Judy continues to resonate with me and inform my work just as the impact that she had on those she tutored continues to reverberate in their lives. **Thank you Judy!**



Bruce Wilson

Volunteer Tutor

By: Julie Clark

ELL Program Director – Downtown



On January 28th, the Downtown ELL program lost a great friend and tutor. Bruce Wilson, a cardiologist who had transitioned to the field of hospice care, died at home surrounded by the family who loved him. Bruce, who began volunteering in 2012, was an exceptional man. A recent article about Bruce in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel highlighted his professional work helping patients and their families prepare for death.

When I met Bruce's daughter at the visitation, she reflected on his time tutoring. She mentioned that when he started, he wasn't sure he could do it, but for him it was something new, a challenge. That in itself says something about the man, that, as accomplished as he was, he was still willing to push himself, to challenge himself to try something new.

When Bruce walked into a room, he brought joy and life. Among the many students he tutored over the years, his most recent, Alejandra, was able to take advantage of Bruce's vast medical knowledge. Alejandra was preparing to be a Spanish/English medical interpreter, so their tutoring lessons sounded like a college Biology class. They worked hard with medical terms, but they had fun, too. The first part of their class usually involved sharing recipes in exquisite detail. Bruce's enthusiasm for life was evident in everything he did. **We will miss him greatly.**



## Calendar Bookmarks

### April

#### 4th - Volunteer Orientation

9:30-10:30am

#### 10th - Student Honors Celebration

11:45am-1:30pm Downtown Center

#### 17th - Volunteer Orientation

5:30-6:30pm

### May

#### 8th - Volunteer Orientation

9:30-10:30am

#### 15th - 2018 Inspiration Awards &

Fundraising Dinner (details on page 10)

#### 24th - Volunteer Orientation

5:30-6:30pm

#### 28th - Memorial Day

Agency Closed

### June

#### 7th - Volunteer Orientation

9:30-10:30am

#### 20th - Volunteer Orientation

5:30-6:30pm

### July

#### 4th - Independence Day

Agency Closed

#### 10th - Volunteer Orientation

9:30-10:30am

#### 11th - Student Honors Celebration

11:45am-1:30pm Downtown Center

#### 26th - Volunteer Orientation

5:30-6:30pm

Milwaukee Achiever and Literacy Services have thrived for a total of 86 years combined, thanks to generous donors who have made a monetary donation, or donated textbooks, or purchased tickets to a fundraising event, or gifted shares of stock, or worked with their employer to match their own donations, or remembered LSW in their wills. We are so grateful!

## Why do you support LSW?



"I have been a tutor at LSW for many years, and Scott and I are supporters of LSW because we firmly believe in the value of education and community involvement. We have seen and experienced first-hand the positive energy created when students and tutors work together, not only to achieve academic goals, but to expand knowledge, experience, and confidence. We believe this is a blueprint for creating a strong, successful, diverse, and caring community."

- Mary & Scott McFadden



"Literacy Services is performing an important service to the Milwaukee community and the students. We find that tutoring in the ELL (Diane) and GED (Rich) programs is enjoyable and greatly rewarding. We are continually impressed by our students' determination and persistence."

- Diane & Richard Kane

## When you are ready to give:

There are many ways to support our students' hard work and transform lives:

- 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
- Gifts of stock, mutual funds, and other securities (may be additional benefits for supporters over 70 ½ years old)
- Deferred income gifts, including charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts
- Bequests to Literacy Services as part of a will and last testament

**Questions about giving?** Call Chad Knezel at 414-344-5878

## 2018 Inspiration Awards



Literacy Services and Milwaukee Achiever joined forces in 2017 to write a new chapter in our shared efforts to improve adult literacy. We believe that literacy and a quality basic education foreshadow a thriving, safe, and prosperous community for all of us.

*Will you join us in writing  
this story of success?*

Enjoy an evening of fun,  
food, and inspiration!

- Play a game of “Book Jenga”
- Bid on a silent auction package, or many!
- Test your luck at our gift card tree or wine pull
- Enjoy drinks, dinner, and dessert
- Celebrate our award winners

Plus, an amazing silent auction with  
great items to bid on, including:

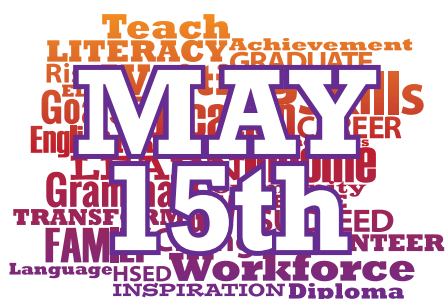
- Private sailing excursion skippered by Sea Dog Sailing
- Green Bay Packer tickets
- “A Day in the Kitchen” at Sanford
- Fine art from local artists and much, much more!



Gift card tree sponsored by



*Please join us!*



**5:00PM**  
Cocktails, Games,  
Silent Auction & Wine Pull

**6:30PM**  
Dinner

**7:15-8:00PM**  
Inspiration  
Awards Program

*New Venue!*

**The Garage at the  
Harley-Davidson Museum®**

At the crossroads of 6th & Canal Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53203

Complimentary valet parking provided.



**Tickets available now! Visit [literacyservices.org/awards](http://literacyservices.org/awards)**

*Thank you*  
to all of our sponsors and supporters

## Get involved!

### Here is an enticing list of ways to get involved:

- **Mark May 15th on your calendar and line up some friends to come with you**
- **Consider donating a wonderful bottle of wine for our wine pull**
- **Donate a gift card for our gift card tree**
- **Make, buy, or imagine an auction item you can uniquely offer**
- **Become a sponsor!**

You can make our 2018 Inspiration Awards & Fundraising Dinner a smash success! The more money we can raise the more people we can get on the path to literacy, dignity, and hope for a better future. Contact **Chad Knezel** by phone at **414-344-5878** or via email at **chad@literacyservices.org** to learn more about supporting our event.

### Volunteer Opportunity

We are looking for a few more volunteers to help us turn some of our donated books into unique centerpieces on Friday, April 6th from 12:30pm to 2:30pm. The process is really quite easy and the results are truly amazing. After a little instruction, you will be able to turn a discarded book into a beautiful piece of art.

Interested? Send a message to **Dustin Slane** at **dustin@literacyservices.org**

## See you there!

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# The Syl·la·bus

Spring 2018

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

## In this issue:

- Guess who won a MANDI award?
- A hidden force behind success
- Are you in the right place?
- Partnership provides resources for unemployed and underemployed
- And more!



**Congratulations to all of our Construction HSED grads!**

## Student Enrollment

Accepting new students! Signup for our Initial Assessment Sessions. Call **414-344-5878** for available dates and times.

## Stay Connected

Follow us on social media and share why Literacy Services of Wisconsin is important to you!



## 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](mailto:chad@literacyservices.org) or call us at **414-344-5878**.