



Finding Your Path

By: Holly McCoy, Executive Director

In the spirit of National Career Development Month in November, I attended several career-focused events to discuss my experiences as an Executive Director and talk more about what the role looks like on a daily basis. These conversations naturally extended to the importance of adult literacy education and I was glad to be able to share this information with upcoming professionals and high school students.

As I met with students from MPS, Marquette, and Mount Mary University, I reflected upon my own career journey. I went to school for education and planned on being a high school teacher. At the time of my graduation, there were limited teaching opportunities (very different from today's environment). I wondered what else I could do with a degree in education, and I interviewed to manage an adult learning center. Nearly twelve years later, it is still a little hard to believe that my professional journey has led me here. While it is not necessarily what I thought I would be doing when I "grew up," it is ultimately everything I want to be doing. As I listened to other professionals share their stories, it became clear that many of us were in the same boat. Key themes were interest in a sector, opportunities at moments that we needed them, and mentors or support systems that believed in our ability to be our best selves.

This also reaffirmed for me that LSW must continue to do all that we can to

see **Your Path** continued on page 2



Congratulations, class of 2022! Preparations are underway for the last graduation of the year. Check out **page 3** for more photos from our Summer Commencement and hear the heartfelt words from student speaker, LaToya Bush.



The Rise of the RISE HSED

By: Betsy Kerns, RISE MKE HSED Instructor

I am very excited to share Literacy Services' newest, first-of-its-kind program, the RISE Entrepreneurial HSED (High School Equivalency Diploma). In this program, we've paired our 16-week high school equivalency program with an intensive entrepreneurial training program called RISE MKE offered by the African American Chamber of Commerce of WI.

The African American Chamber of Commerce of WI (AACCW) has been offering this entrepreneurial training program as a freestanding program for people interested

in opening a new business or scaling up their existing businesses. Their vision is strong African-American-owned businesses and entrepreneurs that promote the economic vibrancy of the community. AACCW offers many programs designed to ensure that minority-owned businesses thrive. In addition to the RISE MKE entrepreneurial program, they offer workshops and corporate planning. We are proud to have this strategic partnership with AACCW.

Let's take a deeper dive into the RISE Entre-

see **RISE HSED** continued on page 6

The Syllabus

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

The Syllabus is the quarterly newsletter of the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Literacy Services of Wisconsin.

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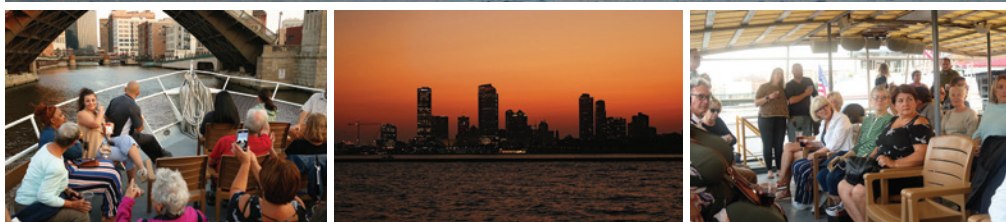
Sara Risley

Founded in 1965, Literacy Services serves adult learners with quality education programs - Adult Education (AE), 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 more than 300 volunteers and financial support from 1000 individuals; 200 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 Equus, Maximus, and Milwaukee Public Schools.

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Literacy lit up the Hoan Bridge on International Literacy Day.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the boat tour to kick off Literacy Month!



Your Path

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ensure that students have access to information and pathways to a variety of careers during their time with our organization. Many of our students have an idea of what they want to do professionally. It is our role to ensure that we help them reach their academic goals AND connect them with industries and companies that will allow them to reach those professional goals. Career exploration and Integrated Education and Training remain top priorities for LSW.

In this edition of the Syllabus, you will read more about LSW's RISE HSED. Many LSW students are active entrepreneurs or have dreams of opening up their own businesses. While entrepreneurship is not a career track that we have traditionally explored for students, our Student First mindset led us to

intentionally partner with another organization that is best suited to cultivate small businesses and support entrepreneurs.

We are listening to our students more than ever. Our organization must continue to be a leader in adult education because Southeast Wisconsin adults deserve educational opportunities that support their whole selves.

Adult literacy is family literacy. Adult literacy is workforce development. Adult literacy is a pathway forward. We appreciate your support of LSW and those who are working toward leveling up their skills and expanding their goals. By supporting adult literacy education, you are creating a community of learning that truly extends beyond the classroom.

My Graduation Speech

By: LaToya Bush, 2022 Summer
Commencement Ceremony Student Speaker

Good evening, friends, family, LSW staff, and my fellow graduating class members of 2022. My name is LaToya Bush and I was born and raised right here in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I'm a strong, independent, single mother of two wonderful children aged 24 and 2 by the names Hosea and Blessing, both of whom have been my biggest motivators for being where I am today. And let me tell you, it has not always been easy to get where I am today.

At the young age of 16, I lost my mother. With my dad not in my life, I was raised by my grandparents, my oldest brother, and other family members. As you can imagine, losing my mother at this age was difficult to overcome. I entered into a depression for a very long time, and coupled with being around the wrong crowd, I eventually dropped out of high school. To this day, not finishing school is not only one of my biggest regrets, but one of my biggest mistakes.



For so long, all I wanted was a second chance to do something positive and make it right. Not just for me, but for my children and family. And today, even for my classmates and peers who looked up to me and believed in me to share my story with you all this evening.

That's when I found Literacy Services of Wisconsin. I can honestly say LSW is the best high school program I have ever attended. They have made the last 4 months a life experience I will never forget. The staff have been nothing but patient, understanding, great communicators, hard working, and to be honest, I probably wouldn't have made it this far without

see **Speech!** continued on page 7

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**Many paths
to GROW.**

**Many paths
to GIVE.**

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RISE HSED

Continued from Page 1

preneurial HSED program. In this 16-week pilot program, 9 students met virtually on Zoom with their instructors four times a week, for 4 hours a day. Students worked directly with their business mentor on branding, networking, pricing, cash flow, and developing a business canvas, similar to a business plan. Our students were very fortunate to have LaQuanda Madison, M.S., President, and CEO of Excell Employment Services, award-winning author, and Certified Life Coach, to name just a few of her accomplishments, as their business mentor. She led each student through the business development process with expertise, warmth, and encouragement.

This program is based on the Integrated Education and Training (IET) model, meaning that the curriculum has been designed so that students are learning academic skills while receiving job training. Students are able to learn by doing, as they build their skills in the context of running a business. For example, math assignments involved calculating gross margin and gross profit, budgeting, bookkeeping, and other essential business-related skills. A recent graduate of the program, Shannon Coffee, writes, "I'm different when it comes to speaking about business. Knowing terms and definitions makes it easier for me to communicate with other entrepreneurs." Shannon is on track to open her own business in 2023, a daycare center designed specifically for children with special needs called *It Takes a Village*.

One highlight of the semester was our end-of-semester field trip to Sherman Phoenix where students met in person for the first



Congrats to our first entrepreneurs to earn the RISE HSED!

time. If you are unfamiliar with Sherman Phoenix, it is a marketplace that houses 27+ minority-owned businesses. The students prepared questions ahead of time to ask the business owners and spent the day interviewing and interacting with them.

All this hard work over the semester culminated in the biggest persuasive essay of all, the pitch! Students participated in Pitch Night at Sherman Phoenix to showcase their businesses to the community. Some won cash prizes, but all were winners, and the students received a certificate of completion and a one-of-a-kind T-shirt commemorating the first graduating class of the RISE Entrepreneurial HSED. All graduates will walk across the stage in December in front of friends and family at MATC's Cooley Auditorium with other HSED and GED graduates at the citywide CBO graduation ceremony. Recent RISE graduate Rose Marie Seaberry, who is over 60 years young, writes, "This class showed me how to be confident, and

to know that it can be hard work, but you can do it. This class let me know that no matter how old you get, you can still accomplish things in your life." Indeed you can. It's never too late to learn.



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Speech!

Continued from Page 3

them. I won't stand up here and say it was all a breeze. Being consistent and on top of our work was a challenge. But we learned about perseverance and how procrastination can sometimes get the better of us. It took my mind and intellect to another level of thinking. It made me proud that I was no longer putting off this accomplishment. The feeling it gave me inside...well, it is more than words can explain.

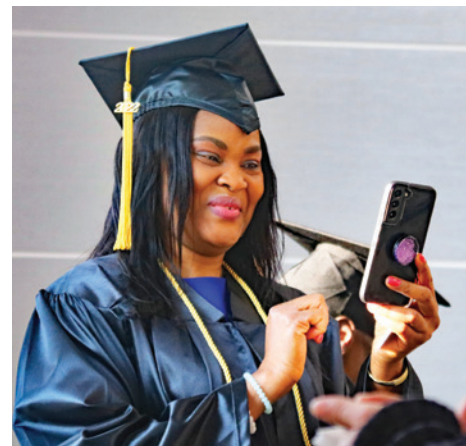
Coming back to school was not just about my next level of education. Yes, many employers require a high school diploma, and most colleges won't accept you without it either, but I'm also proud that I maintained perfect attendance, demonstrated leadership for my classmates, and kept my grades up the entire semester. Intelligence PLUS character is the goal of true education. Education is also about excitement and the feeling that no one can stop you.

Now that I have graduated, I won't stop either. I am entering a two year associate

degree program in Culinary Arts at MATC next semester. I hope to start my own catering business someday. It has been a dream of mine that I want to turn into reality. With each achievement, my winning mindset grows. Throughout this experience, I learned that education develops confidence and helps build the personality in a person. Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare today. My journey in life, every detail - being a child, a parent, and a student have delivered many regrets, yes, but each regret offered a lesson and obstacles that created opportunities.

Graduates of 2022, be proud that you did not let your regrets, mistakes, and obstacles stop you. Be proud of the opportunities you've created for yourself. And lastly, always remember you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think!

We finally did it!
Thank you!





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The Syl·la·bus

Winter 2022

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

In this issue:

- The Rise of a New Program
- Honoring the Class of 2022
- Event Updates
- And more!



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