



## Learners & Advisors

By: *Holly McCoy, Executive Director*

LSW's mission has always been focused on adult literacy education. That is where our expertise lies and we continue to think courageously in order to constantly improve upon the fundamental principles of adult learning. Integral to adult learning are the students who trust us to support them in pursuing their academic goals. LSW has always put the adult students who enroll in our programs front and center. In the last year, we approached our Student First guiding principle with a new platform for engagement.

LSW recognizes that lived experience is a crucial factor in program design and continuous improvement. Beginning in

see **Advisors** continued on page 3



*Students shared their successes and challenges and offered our guests insights into how LSW has helped them grow at our first ever Student Panel at Vendetta Coffee Bar. Our moderator, board member **Dr. Damira Grady**, interviewed four students who have been involved in our programs. Many thanks to **Yaya, Tiffany, Sherard, and Gregory** for their honesty.*



## The Return of In-person Programming

By: *Bianca Johnson-Ortiz, Manager of Adult Education*

Literacy Services returned to in-person programming in September 2022. COVID impacted everything about how we operated, so we had to start from scratch when we returned. What did it look like to create hybrid programming that would best serve our learning community? We didn't have all the answers but we were eager to move forward. We relied on all of our Guiding Principles - Student First, Purposeful Connection, Honor Diversity & Inclusion, and Courageous Thinking - to keep us on track.

The Adult Education - Downtown Center programming serves learners at all skill levels

from non-readers in our foundational reading program through advanced learners prepping for an upcoming semester of our high school equivalency program or studying for GED exams. As we prepared to reopen the Downtown Center fully, we had to begin with how do we provide a varied program menu to reach our wide student population while also incorporating in-person volunteers, our community partners, and staff support.

We serve about 335 students annually at the Downtown Center. We're able to do so through volunteer support, our varied class

offerings, and behind-the-scenes staff management. I'll share with you three snapshots of in-person Adult Ed programming at the Downtown Center via interviews with in-person volunteer tutors.

### **Level 1 Reading Group led by volunteer tutors Jess and Pat**

Jess and Pat are veteran volunteer tutors that began with Literacy Services pre-COVID and provided volunteer support throughout COVID while eagerly awaiting their return to in-person tutoring support. They currently

see **In-person Tutoring** continued on page 2

# 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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**Administrative Team:** Holly McCoy, Executive Director; Chad Knezel, Director of Development & Volunteer Engagement; Tammy Knutson, Director of Finance & Operations; Dustin Slane, Director of Marketing & IT.

## Volunteer Photographer

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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## In-person Tutoring

Continued from Page 1

lead a small group of up to 5 students in a foundational reading group.

### When did you return to in-person tutoring?

**Jess:** As soon as the center opened. We used masks and plexi-glass dividers at individual tables.

**Pat:** I was a little later. The student I had on Zoom went away. This was far more rewarding (in-person vs. virtual).

### Which type of service (virtual, in-person, hybrid) supports students best?

**Pat:** In-person. I think of the layers of potential. It adds to your ability and it makes you a better tutor to be in front of somebody. It's hard to establish trust if you haven't looked them in the eye. Getting a sense of their personality is easier to do in-person. It's good for them to see that this place is up and running. It's a community of learning. There are other students trying to learn and everyone has challenges. They see that they're not the only one.

**Jess:** There's a distance when you're doing something virtually. This is part of the problem that we have socially. It is being able

to read somebody and understand how they're feeling. When we were wearing masks it was hard for them to understand and they're hard for me to understand. It is such a relief to not have to wear masks. It's good for people to come to the center. There is something about coming together, although it's hard for the students that struggle with transportation to come.

### Can you share with me your current volunteer commitment leading a small group?

**Jess:** I am really enjoying these classes. 1:1 gives individual attention. Being in a classroom setting - you learn things that you don't get in 1:1. You learn patience and respect for their classmates. A build up of some confidence. Class situations can be very intimidating. I'm really finding they're speaking up.

**Pat:** It's an efficient way to use tutor time - to group students at a similar level. You imagine you're going to have disruptive students or eyeballs on you. I was a little bit nervous at first but it fell into place. The lesson materials come from program staff but we get to

see [Tutor Q&A continued on page 9](#)







# Advisors

Continued from Page 1

July 2022, LSW initiated the Learner Advisory Board (LAB), which centers on the experiences and perspectives of LSW students who are either currently enrolled or recently completed a program at LSW. The committee is comprised of eight active or former LSW students that represent a wide range of LSW programs and locations and who advise the organization on matters of policy, procedure, and learning. LAB members are provided a stipend for their participation and have been attending organizational events to help us think about new ways to engage the LSW community in this meaningful work. In 2024, LAB members will be leading the way to plan and host a first-of-its-kind LSW alumni event. Stay tuned!

Every decision that LSW makes begins with student success in mind. In order to maximize our mission impact in the community, it is critically important that we listen to the voices of our students. Most recently, LAB members and current LSW students shared

their insights about adult education and how enrolling in classes has impacted their lives, families, and future goals. Four students joined Dr. Damira Grady (LSW board member and Vice President of Equity, Inclusion, and Community Relations at Madison College) for an evening of conversation and lots of joy. Our adult students candidly shared their stories of navigating the dual pressures of family and job responsibilities while simultaneously prioritizing their education. Student voices should continue to be amplified in such a way that celebrates, respects, and honors their journeys.

To that end, our Waukesha Center is hosting a very special event in August to award our first Waukesha student scholarship recipient. This student will be going on to attend Waukesha County Technical College, one of our program partners in the area. As wonderful as they are, these successes are only the beginning. We will remain steadfast in our intentionality and cyclical in increasing

access and opportunities for our students. We will continue to lean into our purposeful partnerships to make sure that students are connected to resources and next steps for all of their evolving academic goals.

Building community is another important aspect of our programming. This September, for National Literacy Month, LSW is partnering with Barby the Book Fairy to host our second annual Milwaukee's Biggest Free Library event. Last year, we provided nearly two hundred families with hundreds of books. This year, we are aiming to share thousands of free books with attendees. Books will range in genre and reading level for folks of all ages. ProLiteracy states that "a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income." We want to be a resource for parents and families while sticking to our mission. Adult literacy is family literacy. We hope that you will join us!

## 2023 Learner Advisory Board



**Latasha**

LSW HSED Graduate,  
Current MATC Student



**Damian**

Current LSW  
Student,  
Adult Education



**Tiffany**

LSW Adult Ed  
Graduate,  
MATC Graduate



**Kasia**

Current LSW  
Student,  
ELL Program



**Charles**

LSW GED® Graduate,  
Owner of The Milwaukee  
Flyers Tumbling Team

Not pictured: Gregory, Current LSW Student, ELL Program; Nikisha, LSW HSED Graduate; Keyonna, LSW HSED Graduate, Current MATC Student ■



## A Grand Slam for Literacy!

On a beautiful Tuesday evening in April, 300 guests joined us for our sold-out Annual Fundraising Dinner at American Family Field and even more of you participated in the fun from home in our virtual silent auction! Attendees had a uniquely Milwaukee experience at the home of the Brewers, with views of the field from the Northwestern Mutual Legends Club and a surprise visit from one of

the Brewers Racing Sausages. DJ Lolo set the mood during our cocktail hour and guests enjoyed music, drinks, appetizers, and a photo booth all along the 3rd base line. Guests also had the opportunity to bid on some unique packages such as signed baseballs and a first pitch fantasy experience courtesy of the Brewers Community Foundation. We felt the support from our entire community with over 50 packages donated from local businesses and community members. As part of the evening program we recognized several community partnerships and honored LSW students and volunteers. We were excited to award LSW students Kathy and Eduardo scholarships to MATC to aid in their continued academic journeys. The evening was a grand slam for literacy and we had a wonderful time sharing LSW's mission and the importance of adult education in our community, while raising vital funds to continue supporting this work.



**Did you miss our event?** Check out our scholarship and community award videos at [bit.ly/3DIPqxx](https://bit.ly/3DIPqxx) or scan the code below.





# Milwaukee's Biggest Free Library

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2023 • 4 PM – 7 PM

**Come look through hundreds of books spread across Kosciuszko Park and choose a favorite to take home for yourself or your family!** Free books for all age ranges, including adults. Plus, live DJ, face painting, Milwaukee Children's Museum's Wonder Wagon, community resource tables, and so much more. No charge to attend!

## Kosciuszko Park

2201 S 7th St, Milwaukee, WI 53215



**LITERACY**  
SERVICES of WISCONSIN



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We Energies Foundation is proud to support **Literacy Services of Wisconsin** in its mission to educate, motivate and inspire students. Together, we are creating a brighter future for our community.



**We Energies  
Foundation**

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# Literacy Services 2023-24 Event Calendar

## 2023

July 3 All sites closed  
 July 4 Independence Day - All sites closed  
 July 27 Summer Staff Retreat - All sites closed  
 Sept 4 Labor Day - All sites closed  
 Sept 5-8 Staff Planning Week - LSW closed to students/tutors  
 Sept 11-Dec 14 HSED Fall Semester  
 Nov 22-24 Fall Break - All sites closed  
 Dec 20- Jan 2 Winter Break - All sites closed

## 2024

Jan 3-5 Staff Planning Week - LSW closed to students/tutors  
 Jan 15 Dr. MLK Jr. Day - All sites closed  
 Jan 22- May 9 HSED Spring Semester  
 Mar 25-29 Staff Planning Week - LSW closed to students/tutors  
 May 27 Memorial Day - All sites closed  
 May 28-31 Staff Planning Week - LSW closed to students/tutors

## Special Events

### Volunteer Social

Wednesday, August 16th, 5:00pm-7:30pm  
 Milwaukee Night Market, 275 W Wisconsin Ave

### GED/HSED Summer Commencement Ceremony

Wednesday, September 6th, 6:00pm  
 We Energies - 231 W Michigan St

### Milwaukee's Biggest Free Library - International Literacy Day

Friday, September 8th, 4:00pm - 7:00 PM  
 Kosciuszko Park - 2201 S 7th St

### Blind Date With a Book at Silver City International Fest

Saturday, September 9th, 12:00pm - 5:00pm  
 W National Avenue between 33rd and 35th St

### 2024 Fundraising Dinner - Save the Date!

Tuesday, April 16th  
 The Garage at Harley-Davidson Museum

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● - Closed ○ - No Classes ● - Special Event ● - Semester Begins

More information at [literacyservices.org](http://literacyservices.org)



## Thank You!

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## Tutor Q&A

Continued from Page 2

manage the flow of the session. At the same time they're learning to read, they're also building social skills, not just academic skills.

### What tips would you share with new or returning tutors?

**Jess:** I'm all about the in-person tutoring. I wish more tutors would come on back. When you're here at the center you can ask for help when you need it and you have all of these materials.

**Pat:** The joy and spark came back when I returned to in-person tutoring. Even when virtual tutoring worked at its best, it fell far short of being at in-person tutoring. You can check in with staff/tutors if you have questions or need feedback from other tutors.



### MATC Math Lab support - John

John currently tutors his long-time student Charlie virtually via Facebook Messenger on a weekly basis while providing in-person tutoring support at the Downtown Center. On Mondays and Wednesdays, our schedule includes MATC led math group classes - John provides one-on-one mini tutoring sessions to learners enrolled in the group class that may need extra support.

### Can you share with me about your tutoring experience with Charlie?

**John:** We started together at the Downtown Center just before COVID and then switched to virtual. We meet on Facebook Messenger because that's what Charlie knows how to use. I discovered his interests and applied his real life engagements to our lessons.

### When did you return to in-person tutoring?

**John:** I prefer to meet in-person but I maintain virtual sessions with Charlie because that's what he needs. I now meet with students in the group math class. I give them specific support to what they're learning in class and allow them to ask questions & get a clear understanding in our 1:1 sessions.

### Which type of service (virtual, in-person, hybrid) supports students best?

**John:** It depends on the student but I think in-person is more successful. It's more of a team approach with the program staff support available. It's easier to access resources available at the center in real-time.

### What tips would you share with new or returning tutors?

**John:** I would encourage tutors to come in to observe live sessions at the center. You get to connect with a community of tutors for support.

### Transitioning between sites - Kathy

Kathy provided tutor support at the Downtown Center pre-COVID and then transitioned to remote sessions via phone with her long-time student Victoria during COVID.

### When did you return to in-person tutoring?

**Kathy:** Victoria and I returned to Silver Spring Neighborhood Center as soon as it was available. There were only a few pairs scheduled at a time and we had to wear masks. I also tutored a small group of foundational reading students after my 1:1 tutoring session with Victoria. We've had challenges due to transportation and communication but for the most part they're there when they can.

### Which type of service (virtual, in-person, hybrid) supports students best?

**Kathy:** Everything is individualized depend-

ing on what works best for the students. The options are good. Victoria could only meet by phone during COVID because of her work schedule.

### What tips would you share with new or returning tutors?

**Kathy:** To some degree, create a personal connection with the student. If you make a mistake, bring it to the light so students are not alone in making mistakes. Be patient with the chaotic lives that a lot of students have - they have a lot of struggles we may not understand or experience.



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# The Syl·la·bus

Summer 2023

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

## In this issue:

- Fundraising Dinner Recap
- Tutor Q&A
- Event Updates
- And more!



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