



## Growing Forward

By: Holly McCoy, Executive Director

As a new year approaches and we say goodbye to 2023, I remain both grateful and hopeful. This past year, we focused on increasing capacity and strengthening our connections to the neighborhoods where we provide programming. In doing so, we were consistently reminded of the pivot that occurred nearly three years ago, the long-term impact that hybrid education has on the community, and our continued commitment to digital literacy and equity.

About two weeks before the pandemic, we were set to open our first location in downtown Waukesha. Despite the opening not matching what we had envisioned for in-person activity, we created connections as best as we could and started to build a presence in the area. Now in its third year of operation, our downtown Waukesha location has grown student enrollment by nearly 80%, seen our first-ever GED graduate from that location, and boosted capacity to serve even more students with the addition of more staff onsite.

All eight LSW locations have been noticing a continued demand for in-person programming over the last few years, and LSW has increased programming and services accordingly. Our commitment to our mission is evident. We are expanding accessibility, offering even more opportunities for adults to engage in ways that not only honor their lives, but consider how they

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## Student Spotlight - Miguel

HSED-EL Student

### Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in Bayamo, a city in the eastern region of Cuba.

### What is your family like?

When I think about my family, what first comes to my mind is my mother and my two older sisters, who have had more influence on my life. Thinking about them, I would feel certain to say that I come from a family that values education. My mother has always been very determined and capable of guiding us to the right path. My family as a whole is very traditional and we all get along well despite the inevitable challenges and differences. Although it has not always been this way, we have each other's backs now and offer support to one another whenever it is needed.

### Do you have any favorite hobbies or pastimes?

Yes, I do. I know this might sound a little conventional, but I enjoy listening to music, particularly classical music, which is my favorite. I believe that music is one of the greatest human creations in history. And not only do I like listening to music but also love creating it. I started playing the violin around six years ago and continued to practice as part of my daily routine. I also enjoy it when I spend my time learning new things, especially those related to science or a foreign language.

### How many languages do you speak?

I speak fluently Spanish as it is my native language. I also consider myself an English speaker, although I still struggle with it a

see **Miguel** continued on page 7

# The Syllabus

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

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

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**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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## Growing

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learn best and take their ultimate goals into account.

The Adult Learning Center (ALC) sadly closed in September. This was a huge loss for the Milwaukee community. Adult literacy and workforce development directly impact health and wellbeing. Literacy Services worked with ALC to support student transition and take on the influx of students affected by the closure. I was able to attend the final graduation ceremony for ALC. It was both beautiful and disheartening. When resources are removed, it does not change the existing need. As exemplified by our past mergers, we must remain dedicated to adult education in ways that foster intentionality and solid relationships.

Last year was an exciting one, as we hosted our first-ever student panels, celebrated our students and partners, and put on the



Biggest Free Library event that welcomed hundreds of neighbors to Kosciusko Park. I am looking forward to engaging in similar ways this upcoming year, with plans to host even more gatherings that highlight student achievement and connect the broader community to the power of literacy.

While it is not always recognized, adult literacy is at the intersection of improving K-12 student achievement, providing pathways to post-secondary and training opportunities, increased earnings, health-care equity through access and advocacy, and a better overall community. You are receiving this newsletter because you already know that. You believe in the work we are doing. Please know that we appreciate your support, advocacy, and investments in our mission. Southeastern Wisconsin is a better place because of you. Thank you.



# Locations & Services

Literacy Services of Wisconsin provides programming throughout southeastern Wisconsin. Meet the staff, and programs offered at each site. We hope that this information helps you become familiar with Literacy Services' team and operations.

**Tammy Knutson**  
Director of Finance & Operations

**Chad Knezel**  
Director of Development & Volunteer Engagement

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Lead ELL Instructor

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Associate Director

**Christopher Ingham**  
Technology Administrator

**Bianca Johnson-Ortiz**  
Manager of Adult Education Programs

**555**  
**LITERACY SERVICES**

## Downtown Center

**Downtown Center** (414) 344-5878

**555 N. Plankinton Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53203**

Prominently located on the corner of Michigan Street and Plankinton Avenue, our LSW headquarters is in the heart of downtown. Services include GED/HSED preparation, Adult Education (beginning to intermediate reading, language, and math), English language learning, digital literacy programming, and workplace readiness training.



### Ready to Enroll?

Scan the code or visit  
<https://literacyservices.org/enroll>  
to get started!

**Steve Barron**  
Manager of Credentialing  
Programs & Chief Examiner



**Betsy Kerns**  
CPT HSED Instructor



### HSED & Financial Literacy

WRTP/BIG STEP is the home base for our Manufacturing & Construction Trades HSED Programs. This site hosts HSED programs that provide students the opportunity to earn their High School Equivalency Diploma along with a nationally recognized MC3 pre-apprenticeship or Certified Production Technician credential. LSW also offers contextualized HSED programming at various YouthBuild sites around Milwaukee.



**Charlotte Newgord**  
WRTP/BIG STEP  
HSED Instructor



**Mike Sengyothinh**  
Manager of Workforce  
Development Programs

### Silver Spring Neighborhood Center

(262) 755-3245

5460 N 64th St., Milwaukee, WI 53218

Students on the northside can choose to enroll in GED/HSED preparation, Adult Education (beginning to intermediate reading, language, and math), English language learning, digital literacy programming, and workplace readiness training.



**Hannah Lingenfelter**  
Manager of  
Waukesha Operations



**Caitlin Petersen**  
Refugee Support ELL Coordinator  
& Organizational Evaluator



**Mikelle Bloechi**  
Silver Spring Neighborhood Center  
Site Coordinator

### Waukesha Center (262) 547-7323

831 N. Grand Ave., Suite 200, Waukesha, WI 53186

Our office is centrally located in downtown Waukesha at the "five points" intersection. This location offers GED/HSED preparation, Adult Education (beginning to intermediate reading, language, and math), English language learning, digital literacy programming, and workplace readiness training.



**Charles Bradford**  
Manager of Community  
Corrections Programs

**Carol Josten**  
North Division High School  
Site Coordinator



**Sarah Mellstrom**  
MPS ELL Instructor



**David Peters**  
Milwaukee County Jail  
Program Coordinator

### MPS Family Resource Centers

LSW partners with Milwaukee Public Schools to engage parents as they pursue their continued educational goals. Sites offer reading, language, and math instruction, GED/HSED preparation, English language learning, and basic computer classes.



**South Division HS (414) 902-8388**

1515 W. Lapham Blvd. Room 111, Milwaukee, WI 53204

**North Division HS (414) 267-5171**

1011 W. Center St., Room 158, Milwaukee, WI 53206

### Corrections

LSW partners with the Milwaukee County Jail and the Department of Corrections to provide educational opportunities to incarcerated individuals in Southeastern Wisconsin and bridge access to re-entry services.

Visit [literacyservices.org](http://literacyservices.org) for more information about our services.



## Україна в моєму серці

By: Hannah Lingenfelter, Manager of Waukesha Operations

### Україна в моєму серці - Ukraine is in my heart.

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine and as of November 14, 2023 there are 6,287,500 Ukrainian refugees globally. Yulia Tolchynska fled Ukraine with her two children in March 2022 and has carried Ukraine in her heart for almost two years as the war continues. Her story is one of resiliency, determination, and the transformative power of education.



Yulia is a successful businesswoman and is married to her high school sweetheart, Oleksii, who she has two children with, Oleksandr (14) and Valeria (11). Life was

happy for the family of four in Zaporozhye, Ukraine, but as political tensions escalated and the echoes of distant artillery fire grew closer, Yulia and Oleksii knew she must leave the country with their children. Oleksii, like many other Ukrainian men, would have to stay behind and join the military. The next day, burdened with the weight of uncertainty, Yulia and her children boarded a train to Montenegro and soon thereafter, a plane to the United States.

Yulia's first goal upon moving in with her childhood friend in New Berlin, Wisconsin was to overcome the language barrier. She scheduled an appointment with Literacy Services in Waukesha where she enrolled in online classes and began virtual tutoring. She progressed quickly and became comfortable attending parent-teacher conferences, going to doctor appointments, and perhaps most importantly, talking to new American friends.

However, despite these early triumphs, the challenges continued. She juggled trying to run her business from a new country, single parent responsibilities and the relentless pursuit of learning English. But finally, good news came eight months after leaving Ukraine, when her husband, Oleksii, was able to join them in the United States and brought the family dog as a surprise. With the support of Literacy Services and job



placement programs he secured a job with Spectrum that allows him to provide for his family and practice his English skills every day.

Now, Yulia and her husband are planning for their future in the United States but hope to one day be able to return to Ukraine. The hope for a brighter future and the resilience to rebuild in the face of displacement define the refugee experience. Ukrainian refugees, like countless others across the world, carry pain but also bear the strength of their countries and cultures in their hearts. Despite where Yulia may live now, Ukraine is in [her] heart - Україна в моєму серці



## Interested in Volunteering?

Scan the code or visit  
<https://literacyservices.org/volunteer>  
to check out our current volunteer  
opportunities.



## Thank You!

The following donors made gifts or pledged support between May 26 and November 15, 2023. Thank you 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 via email at [chad@literacy-services.org](mailto:chad@literacy-services.org) or by phone at (414) 226-5357

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Gifts of cash • One-time or recurring online gifts • In-kind gifts such as furniture, books, or office supplies (check out the wish list on our website for current needs) • Deferred income gifts, including charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts • Bequests to Literacy Services as part of a will and last testament • Gifts of stock, mutual funds, and other securities (may be additional benefits for supporters over 70 ½ years old)



**\$5/month** • Provides GED practice test vouchers for 15 students.



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**Questions about giving?** Call Chad Knezel at (414) 226-5357

# Miguel

*Continued from Page 1*

little. Additionally, I have an A1 level in German, from a few classes I took a couple of years ago.

## **Why did you come to the United States?**

Before explaining my reasons I would like to mention that it was not an easy decision to make, and I had to encounter a strong feeling of fear and courage. To be honest, my primary reason was the urgent necessity of leaving my country, rather than coming specifically to the United States. I had to run away, not only from the economic limits but also from the oppression and the lack of liberty. This led me to consider the United States as my first option. And I was not wrong at all. I feel really pleased and fortunate to be here, welcomed with such a hearty reception by both this country and the people I have met.

## **How did you find Literacy Services of Wisconsin?**

Due to my lack of official documents from my country and my aspiration to pursue a college degree here, I sought to validate my unofficial High School Diploma from Cuba or get an equivalent in the United States. My first step was to navigate the internet to gather information about my options, so that is how I found Literacy Services of Wisconsin and successfully obtained my High School Equivalency Diploma in a few weeks. However, I decided to enroll in English classes to improve my writing and reading skills, which has been one of the best choices I have made so far.

## **What programs are you participating in?**

I am currently participating in the High School Equivalency Diploma for English Learners (HSED-EL) program. What I most like about this program is that it is quite comprehensive. Not only do I enhance my English skills, but also can learn about US history and discuss



science topics. This program is also free of charge, making it affordable and accessible for those who recently arrived in this country like me. And lastly, but just as crucially, the excellent and supporting teachers I have met in this program.

## **What are your educational goals?**

As I mentioned earlier, my primary goal is to pursue a college degree, specifically one related to healthcare. That's why I enrolled in the university, as I want to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Although I had started medical college in my home country, I am starting from scratch here. I knew that this would take a longer and more expensive journey, so I reconsidered my options and decided to pursue nursing. It's a rewarding career for several reasons and offers earlier entry to the workforce compared to becoming a physician. Becoming a nurse also meets my aspirations, and makes my educational journey a bit more affordable.

## **How has Literacy Services supported you in achieving your educational goals?**

Literacy Services is supporting me in several ways. Firstly, it is providing me with preparation for college. While I completed high school in my native country and even took several college courses, I did so in a different language and a different educational system. I possess a good understanding of science and effective communication skills, but in Spanish, and this linguistic difference has created barriers. Literacy Services is helping me bridge the gap while becoming more familiar with the education

system in this country. At no cost, it is offering me access to high-quality training and education, focusing on my specific goals, which consist of attending college.

## **What are your career goals?**

My first career goal is to achieve a bachelor's degree in nursing. Then, I would like to excel. I'm currently considering two options: one consists of pursuing a master's degree in nursing, while the other one involves a career switch to become a physician, specializing in dermatology, which has always been my dream job. However, I haven't made a final decision yet.

## **What are your hopes for the future?**

In 10 years, I hope to be with my family again, visiting them frequently and sharing special moments with them — something I'm unable to do as much now. I hope to have realized my dream of becoming a nurse and making great progress in my field. I imagine my mother feeling proud and satisfied about what I've achieved so far. In addition to my personal goals, I also hope to have made several contributions to my community by that time. In the future, I see myself carrying more responsibilities, enriching my experience, working hard, staying focused on my goals, and holding a good steady job with better economic stability and balance between my professional and personal life. Furthermore, one of the things I have always wanted has been to travel and discover new cultures, so I hope I will have visited a couple of countries by that point.



**LITERACY**  
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# The Syl·la·bus

Winter 2023

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

In this issue:

- Students from Ukraine & Cuba
- Locations & Services
- Event Updates
- And more!

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