



Art of Literacy

By: Holly McCoy-Perez,
Executive Director

Every year, I spend time thinking about what I want to share at our gala. This year, I kept coming back to one simple truth: every person has strengths, and every person deserves the opportunity to learn in a way that honors who they are.

That belief is at the heart of Literacy Services of Wisconsin.

There is an art to literacy. It is found not only in words, but in how people learn, communicate, solve problems, and express themselves. Success does not look the same for everyone, and educational attainment is not a measure of intelligence. Every student who walks through our doors brings unique experiences, talents, and goals. Our role is to remove barriers, build on those strengths, and create pathways that allow them to thrive.

When we put students first, extraordinary things happen.

Last year, LSW served over a thousand adult students across eight locations in Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Racine. Together, 2024-25 students completed more than 68,000 hours of learning. We celebrated 303 GED and HSED graduates, representing 12 percent of all high school equivalency graduates in Wisconsin. Since 2019, we have tripled the number of graduates from our programs.

These outcomes are not the result of one organization working alone. They reflect what is possible when education is connected to workforce development, community partnerships, and individualized support. Adult education creates stronger



families, a more prepared workforce, and healthier communities. When we invest in adults, the impact extends far beyond the classroom.

None of this would be possible without the people who believe in our students. More than 300 volunteers dedicated nearly 7,900 hours last year, providing tutoring, mentorship, encouragement, and the relationships that help students persevere through challenges. Their generosity reminds our students that someone believes in them, often at a time when they need it most.

Our donors make this work possible as well. Your investment creates opportunities that

change lives every day. Because you believe in this mission, adults who once thought education was out of reach are earning diplomas, continuing into college and workforce training, and creating brighter futures for themselves and their families.

I believe in the transformative power of adult education because I have lived it. I know firsthand that literacy can change the trajectory of a life.

Thank you for believing in our students, our volunteers, and our mission. Together, we are illuminating literacy and, in doing so, illuminating futures.

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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Photography by Literacy Services staff or volunteer Sara Risley, unless otherwise credited.

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 Equivalency 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 the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. We are grateful for our partnerships with WRTP | BIG STEP, Maximus, and Milwaukee Public Schools.

1737 N Palmer Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 344-5878

literacyservices.org
info@literacyservices.org



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Each year, the Brewers' players, coaches and entire organization contribute millions of dollars to hundreds of Wisconsin nonprofits – improving the health, education, recreational opportunities and overall well-being of children and families in our communities. Please join us in going to bat for these worthwhile causes. Because creating a happier, healthier environment for all is definitely a team effort.

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**SPECIAL THANKS
TO OUR LUMINARY SPONSOR!**



Our LSW community gathered at Jan Serr Studio on Milwaukee's East Side on May 28th to illuminate Literacy at our Annual Fundraising Dinner.

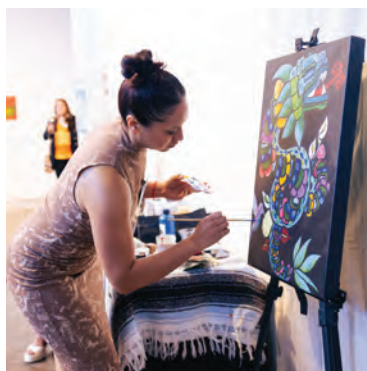
As guests entered for cocktail hour in the gallery, curated by LSW volunteer Sara Risley, they enjoyed appetizers, a vibrant silent auction, live music by Doug and Veronica, and live painting by several professional artists.

As guests transitioned upstairs for dinner, they were greeted by stunning views of Lake Michigan and the warm ambiance created by Anita Bergermeister on the baby grand piano.

Over dinner, Milwaukee's First Lady, Dominique Johnson, drew the crowd's attention to our three student scholarship winners Oscar Lucas-Alejos, Shakila Salim, and Rita Hernandez and one volunteer awardee, Randy Dean, who each shared stories of Literacy Services' impact. Student awardee and LSW graduate Tinisha Brown gave a powerful speech on her journey towards earning her High School Equivalency Diploma.

To close the night, Executive Director Holly McCoy-Perez captivated the audience with her remarks, highlighting the organization's accomplishments, her hopes for the continuing strength of our work, and her personal alignment with all that we do. Thank you to everyone who supported this year's event!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ILLUMINATING LITERACY



KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Tinisha Brown
 2026 Pathway to Progress
 Scholarship Awardee

My name is Tinisha Brown. I'm a proud 2025 graduate of Literacy Services of Wisconsin. I would like to share a little about my very own journey that led me to graduation.

One of many obstacles that prevented me from receiving my high school diploma was becoming a teenage mom. At the time, I chose to prioritize my child's well-being over my educational needs. Being a teen mom didn't ruin my life; it gave me a greater sense of purpose and leadership.

Every time I got the motivation to go back and finish, something would happen. Education was always an important value for me, even if I could not prioritize myself because I had to focus on providing for my three daughters. Despite not having my diploma, I was still able to create a stable home, a loving environment, and a solid foundation. I was also able to obtain my credentials to become a Certified Nursing Assistant and a Certified Medical Assistant.

I wanted more for my daughters.

I have always wanted to be the mom that my kids could look to for continuous support. They always know I have their back. I started to realize that I needed to lead in a different way. While school was always a priority, I needed to finally show

that I was ready to make that choice.

Walking into Literacy Services of Wisconsin, I didn't know what to expect, but I had one thing on my mind: to obtain my GED. The decision to return to school was simple. I'm more focused and ready to further my career so I can provide a better life for my family.

My experience was nothing short of amazing. Being a part of LSW's program helped me set the bar of achievement even higher for myself. The staff and volunteers at LSW, especially Carol, Iris, and Bianca, encouraged me to keep going despite challenges along the way. My favorite part of this program was being accepted and allowed to move at my own pace and flexibility. The most challenging part of this journey was getting started and staying persistent.

Finally graduating was my most favorite moment of LSW. That day felt unbelievable. I was scared. I was nervous. I was happy. I was overwhelmed. I thought to myself, "you did this." I don't think that I have been as proud of myself in a long time. That night was everything to me.

I balance two jobs, go to school full time, and still show up for those who matter... (WHOOOH) I even have to buy sleep sometimes. As a Children's Health Assistant for MPS, I work with children with special needs. It is a very fulfilling role for me. The children I work with fill me with love. They are so dope. I call them my superheroes.

In the evening, I work as a CNA with the elderly. I get to meet different people from different walks of life. I learn so much about their experiences and it has helped me view the world in a different way. I am a natural caregiver. I have a knack for caregiving and that is what has been driving my next steps after graduation.

I want to lead by example and prove that it's never too late to pursue your dreams, no matter the delay. I can't preach what I'm not practicing. With my girls being older, I

decided to recommit to my own goals. I owe this to them as much as I owe it to myself.

I have two daughters who graduated from high school and are currently in college. One is studying to be a NICU nurse and the second to become a paralegal. My third daughter is currently a freshman at Milwaukee High School of the Arts.

So.. yeah. I did that.

I am currently enrolled at MATC to further my career in the healthcare field to become a respiratory therapist. A respiratory therapist is a healthcare provider who specializes in breathing and cardiopulmonary disorders-like asthma, bronchitis, and other breathing disorders.

If I could share anything, it would be to never give up on your dreams. Despite obstacles and life, my dream has always been to become the woman I always knew I could be.

A woman who is financially stable, strong, independent, an amazing mother, driven, and a woman who could inspire others.

Thank you for supporting this work. It changes lives.



CONGRATS, 2026 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES!

Oscar Lucas Alejos

Oscar is enrolled in the Pre-Tech Healthcare Certificate and Nursing Assistant programs at WCTC, working toward his Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) diploma. As an English Language Learner, he has shown exceptional dedication, balancing full-time work with rigorous coursework and consistent academic growth.



Oscar plans to work as a CNA while pursuing a nursing degree and becoming a medical interpreter, helping Spanish-speaking patients navigate healthcare with confidence. Known for his positivity, leadership, and commitment to others, he is driven to make a meaningful impact in his community and the healthcare field.



Rita Hernandez

Rita is a graduate of the YouthBuild HSED program, where she earned her high school diploma while completing Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training. Through hands-on clinical experience, she developed strong patient care and communication skills, strengthening her passion for healthcare.

Rita plans to pursue a career as a Dental Hygienist at MATC, beginning her studies in Fall 2026. A dedicated and proactive learner, she is known for her strong work ethic, clear communication, and positive spirit. Motivated by a desire to build a better future for her family and set an example for her son, Rita is committed to making a meaningful impact in the lives of others.

Shakila Salim

Shakila is an aspiring Registered Nurse planning to pursue a two-year associate's degree at MATC, beginning with general education courses while awaiting admission. Originally from Malaysia, she discovered her passion for helping others through public health outreach in rural communities and brings valuable multilingual skills to her future in healthcare.



A Rohingya refugee, Shakila has shown remarkable resilience and determination. Her academic growth, strong attendance, and active participation reflect her deep commitment to learning. Known for her warmth, humor, and positive spirit, she uplifts those around her and shows great promise in her journey to serve others.

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CHECK OUT OUR VIDEO RECAP & MEET OUR STUDENTS





Building Second Chances Through Our Partnership with ATTIC

By: Tiera Taylor, Lead Community Based Reentry Coordinator

Since July 2025, Literacy Services of Wisconsin has been proud to partner with ATTIC (Alternatives to Traditional Incarceration of Citizens), an organization dedicated to supporting justice-impacted individuals as they transition back into the community. This partnership has allowed us to connect more adults with educational opportunities that help them build confidence, achieve their goals, and create brighter futures.



ATTIC was founded on the belief that comprehensive, evidence-based interventions are essential for long-term successful reintegration. Their team of Re-Entry Specialists receives referrals from Department of Corrections Probation Agents and works closely with clients to identify their needs. Through the intake process, clients are connected to resources that can help them succeed, whether that means housing assistance through Community Advocates, employment support through Project Return, financial education through Riverworks Financial, or educational services through Literacy Services of Wisconsin.

As a Re-Entry Coordinator with LSW, I work directly with ATTIC participants who are interested in beginning or continuing their education. My role begins with the enrollment process, including administering the TABE assessment to determine appropriate class placement. From there, I work one-on-one with students to create a Personalized Education Plan tailored to their educational goals and current needs. We

also discuss potential barriers that could affect their success and identify community resources that can help them stay on track.

One of the most rewarding parts of my role is maintaining ongoing relationships with students. Every 30 days, I meet with them to check in on their progress, provide encouragement, and help them navigate any challenges they may be facing. These conversations often become important moments of motivation and accountability, reminding students that they have a team supporting them throughout their educational journey.

A recent success story highlights the impact of this partnership. I am excited to share that two ATTIC referred students recently completed their HSED through our Manufacturing/Construction HSED program at WRTM | BIG STEP. They graduated from the

program on June 17th after successfully completing 16 weeks of intensive coursework. The class met Monday through Friday from 9:00AM to 1:00PM, requiring significant time commitment, effort, and perseverance. Both students remained dedicated throughout the program and worked hard to reach this important milestone.

Their achievement is a testament not only to their determination but also to the power of collaboration. By connecting individuals with the right resources, support systems, and educational opportunities, our partnership with ATTIC helps people overcome obstacles and move toward greater stability and success. We look forward to continuing this important work and celebrating many more student achievements in the future.



To learn more about services provided by ATTIC, visit [correctionalservices.org](https://www.correctionalservices.org).

Donor Spotlight: Jim & Barbara Fisher

For more than 50 years, Jim and Barbara Fisher have been part of the Literacy Services story—as volunteers, donors, and steadfast champions of adult education.

Their journey began in the early 1970's after hearing fellow church member and LSW director Vivian Matz speak about Literacy Services. Inspired by her vision, Jim joined the Board of Directors, and before long, he and Barbara were both volunteering.

For years, the couple spent one morning each week working one-on-one with adult learners before sharing lunch with fellow volunteers. Looking back, they remember not only the friendships they formed but also the joy of watching students succeed.

"We were so excited about reading," Barbara recalled. "We thought it was important that other people learned to do that, too."

The breakthrough moments still stand out. **"It was so much fun when someone would catch on to something,"** she said. **"It was worth celebrating."**

As lifelong educators—Barbara in elementary education and Jim teaching at the graduate level—they found tutoring adult learners to be both familiar and deeply rewarding. Their commitment to volunteerism was rooted in family values and reinforced by their faith.

"I thought it was just part of our family culture," Barbara said. "Give back."

Over the decades, that commitment expanded beyond volunteering. The Fishers have faithfully supported LSW through charitable giving, believing that financial support is essential to sustaining the organization's mission.



*Anne Hamilton Geilfuss, LSW Board President 1991-93
and Dr. James Fisher, LSW Board President 1993-95*

"You can't make the work happen without the money," Jim said. "We'd like to give it while we're still alive so that we could see how much people enjoy it."

That philosophy led them to make a significant capital gift toward LSW's new Brewers Hill headquarters. While updating their estate plans, they decided not to wait to make their charitable investments.

"We decided that it would be better if we were to give those gifts... starting now," Jim explained.

Having witnessed LSW evolve from a small storefront into a thriving organization serving learners throughout Milwaukee, the Fishers are excited for its future. While they appreciate the growth of classroom instruction, they hope the organization never loses sight of the power of personal relationships.

"Very often, the people that can't read very well... need someone to cheer them on," Jim said.

Barbara agreed, emphasizing that every learner deserves patience, encouragement, and compassion.

Today, as Jim and Barbara celebrate an incredible 70 years of marriage, their legacy reflects a lifetime devoted to education, service, and generosity. Their enduring support has helped open doors for countless adult learners, and their example continues to inspire others to invest in the power of literacy.

We are deeply grateful for Jim and Barbara's remarkable commitment. Their story reminds us that lasting change is built one relationship, one learner, and one act of generosity at a time.

Thank You!

The following donors made gifts or pledged support between January 1 and June 30, 2026. 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 Madison Olig at (414) 344-5878 or MOlig@literacyservices.org.

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In honor of:

All My Teachers - *Barbara J Olson • Judy Hilson - Hannah Schwefel • Cecilia Hutt & Sophia Hutt - Colin Hutt & Colleen Hutt • Elizabeth Schmid - Thomas & Judy Schmid • John Shefchik & David Peters - Joyce Mielke*

In memory of:

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AUGUST 28TH**
4:00 PM – 7:00 PM



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Scan the QR code below or visit
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to check out our current volunteer
opportunities.



There are many ways to support our students' hard work!

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)



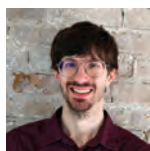
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Call Madison Olig at (414) 344-5878 or email MOlig@literacyservices.org



Unique Perspective

Nolan Benson, Manager of Corrections & Reentry Education Programs

Michael Eitel began his tutoring work at Racine Correctional Institution after being selected through an intensive interview panel to support students in the MC3/HSED program — a collaboration between Literacy Services of Wisconsin (LSW) and the Wisconsin DOC. MC3/HSED (Multi Craft Core Curriculum) is a 16 week program that helps learners work toward their HSED while gaining construction pre-apprenticeship readiness skills.

During this time, Michael worked closely with DOC instructors and with Nolan Benson, Manager of Corrections & Reentry Education Programs for LSW. Nolan's mentorship and support played a major role in Michael's development as both an educator and a leader.

In Michael's words:

"The MC3/HSED curriculum opened my eyes to how powerful hands on education can be. It showed students that skilled trades are practical and valuable career paths. I watched people go from reading and writing at a second or third grade level to walking across a stage in a cap and gown."

"Tutoring isn't just academics; it's heart. Many students came in with learning difficulties or personal challenges. I could relate to them, sit with them, and help them stay goal oriented. Sometimes the most important part isn't the lesson — it's listening, encouraging, and showing students that someone genuinely cares. Literacy Services of Wisconsin treats students like human beings, not numbers."



"A major part of my journey was the support I received from Nolan, who became like a brother to me. He was professional, warm, and deeply invested in my growth. The staff didn't just teach — they built relationships, supported families, and created a community. Their formula works because it's built on real connection."

With the help of LSW and the Thrive for Life program, Michael successfully transitioned back into the community, where he continued to advance academically and professionally. He enrolled full time at MATC, began writing and publishing books, and launched multiple creative projects — including EliteBooks365.com, his own book creation studio.

Today, Michael continues to grow and serve others. He is a Scholarship Special-

ist Advisor at a local college, helping students navigate financial aid, scholarship opportunities, and academic pathways. His work blends compassion, mentorship, and lived experience — the same qualities that made him an exceptional tutor.

"Because of the MC3/HSED program, Thrive for Life, and the people who believed in me, my life is on track. I'm employed, focused, writing books, building a future, and continuing to advance every day. I'm living proof that the right support system can change everything."

Michael credits the MC3/HSED program, Literacy Services of Wisconsin, Thrive for Life, and especially Nolan Benson for helping him transform his life, discover his purpose, and become the person he is today.



Literacy Services - 2026-27 Calendar

Special Events

Milwaukee's Biggest Free Library at Kosciuszko Park
2201 S 7th St, Milwaukee
Friday, August 28, 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm

GED/HSED Summer Commencement Ceremony

We Energies Auditorium
231 W. Michigan St, Milwaukee
Thursday, September 10, 6:00 pm

Book Giveaway at Silver City International Fest
Silver City Neighborhood, Pierce St., Milwaukee
Saturday, September 12th, 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Drag Bingo Fundraiser at POP
124 W National Ave., Milwaukee
Thursday, October 1, 7:00 pm
Reservations are recommended >



- Closed
- LSW HSED Semester Start
- No Classes
- LSW HSED Semester Finish
- Special Event

2026 Planned Closures

Aug 31 - Sept 4 Staff Planning Week - LSW closed to students/tutors
Sept 7 Labor Day - All sites closed
Nov 25-27 Fall Break - All sites closed
Dec 21- Jan 1 Winter Break - All sites closed

2027 Planned Closures

Jan 4-8 Staff Planning Week - LSW closed to students/tutors
Jan 18 Dr. MLK Jr. Day - All sites closed
Mar 22-26 Staff Planning Week - LSW closed to students/tutors
May 24-28 Staff Planning Week - LSW closed to students/tutors
May 31 Memorial Day - All sites closed

Academic Calendar

Fall 2026 Semester

LSW Core: Tuesday, September 8 - Friday, December 18
LSW HSED: Tuesday, September 8 - Thursday, December 17
MATC: Monday, August 24 - Friday, December 18
MPS: Tuesday, September 1 - Friday, December 18

Spring 2027 Semester

LSW Core: Monday, January 11 - Friday, May 21
LSW HSED: Tuesday, January 19 - Thursday, May 20
MATC: Tuesday, January 19 - Friday, May 21
MPS: Monday, January 4 - Tuesday, June 15

Summer 2027 Semester

LSW Core: Tuesday, June 1 - Friday, August 27
LSW HSED: Tuesday, June 1 - Thursday, August 26

July						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
	6	7	8	9	10	11
	13	14	15	16	17	18
	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

January						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

April						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

May						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

June						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			



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The Syl·la·bus

Summer 2026

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- Illuminating Literacy Highlights
- ATTIC Partnership
- Donor Spotlight
- And more!



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