



# Literacy News

A Quarterly Publication of the Three Rivers Literacy Alliance

Spring 2004

Judith Stabelli  
Executive Director

Brian Schlichtenmyer  
Editor

## Literacy Site Brings Families Together

Site Coordinator Aura Cuevas greeted the families as they entered. “*Buenas tardes, Lorena . . . Buenas tardes, Andrea.*” At Three Rivers Literacy Alliance-CANI Head Start Family Literacy at St. Hyacinth, five mothers and their children shared a meal, conversation, and laughter before Parent and Child (PAC) time. After PAC time, the children remained for kindergarten preparation class while parents went to the classroom for adult learning.

On this Wednesday afternoon, PAC time involved mothers helping their preschoolers separate colored objects. Sitting at small table and chairs, Lorena and Andrea opened a hinged box like a backgammon board. Inside were a jumble of colored shapes. Lorena offered suggestions. Andrea giggled often as she sorted the shapes by color.

Lorena Quintana and her daughter Andrea Anaya are two of the dozen families enrolled this program year. Lorena’s husband Martin Anaya cooks at Joe’s Crab Shack, and Lorena operates machines that make automobile lights at Sidler Manufacturing. Born in Mexico, they want to see their daughter graduate

from high school and go to college knowing two languages. Lorena mentions that she and Andrea have already made strides in learning more English.

Aura concurs, adding Lorena’s very interested in learning English so she can speak to and understand doctors when necessary. She “knows more than she realizes.” Aura points out how confidence grows as St. Hyacinth’s students strengthen their English skills. Three or four of the fairly high level students are interested in GED preparation

Aura’s been with this particular Family Literacy Program from the beginning, January 2000. It’s been known by many names because of its many locations over the years. Originally, families met at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church. Then they met for a summer at Anthis Career Center. For the second program year, families gathered at St. Peter’s Head Start Center, and after that it was the Salvation Army building. All that will end this fall when it will move permanently to the Head Start facility currently under construction at Hanna and Creighton.

Family Literacy at St. Hyacinth focuses on Hispanic families who have a child in Head Start. Additional families are provided on-site childcare for their school age children. The new Hanna-Creighton facility will allow space to provide



Lorena and daughter Andrea share Parent and Child (PAC) time at the Literacy Alliance-CANI Head Start Family Literacy Site at St. Hyacinth.

infant/toddler care as well. Its afternoon/evening meeting time enrolls primarily working mothers like Lorena. While improving their English language skills, St. Hyacinth parents will read to their young children regularly. Their children will gain skills that prepare them for kindergarten, such as language, problem solving, motor, and social skills.

The program represents a unique combination of partners. FWCS pays adult education teacher costs. CANI Head Start provides the early childhood classroom and staff, transportation, and meals. Catholic Charities donates space at the St. Hyacinth facility. It is one of three operating sites of the Families Learning Together collaborative which is now in its tenth year. Other sites are at Adams Elementary School and East Wayne Street Center.

# GED Graduation Moves Many

Though a chilly thirty five degrees outside, it was warm and friendly in the Scottish Rite Center. On February 18, graduates from Anthis and Three Rivers Literacy Alliance adult education programs filled the stage, waiting their turn to receive GED diplomas.

Before diplomas were distributed, five graduates spoke. Their stories moved many on stage and in the audience of family, friends, tutors, and teachers. They told stories of sacrifice and determination, hard work and accomplishment.

The joy was palpable as graduates were named and given diplomas. Graduates grinned and gave gestures indicating "I did it!" People in the audience whooped and cheered as their family member or friend received the diploma.



Twelve Three Rivers Literacy Alliance graduates gather for a photograph at GED Commencement. A total of forty five Literacy Alliance students earned their GED diplomas this year. Among the Anthis and Literacy Alliance adult education programs 297 graduated.



Six ESL students pose for a group graduation picture. Four are Three Rivers Literacy Alliance students. They are Blanca Sanchez (top middle), Natalia Cruz (top right), Ana Salmeron (bottom middle), and Luz Hernandez (bottom right).

---

## Learning Center Student Succeeds

Melida Ramon felt she needed to drop out of high school. She had a drug problem which she attributed to the school environment. She believed she couldn't lick the problem and wouldn't graduate anyway if she stayed. "I worked out a deal with my parents," Melida says, "to drop out and work toward a GED." They agreed.

Attending rehab and working at Big Lots in New Haven, Melida began to think about the GED. What really got her started, however, was an encounter with a school friend who wasn't doing very well. It prompted Melida to get even more serious about taking control of her life.

A coworker whose son had benefited from the New Haven Learning Center recommended Melida give the Three Rivers Literacy Alliance a call. She struggled there for about a year. Math, particularly algebra, came with difficulty. The following year she returned to GED preparation at the Literacy Alliance's Sherman Street Learning Center, which is now at Trinity United Methodist Church.

Math had always been Melida Ramon's toughest subject. It shook her confidence, but at the Learning Center teacher Nan Wilson kept telling Melida, "I believe you can do it." Melida states that she wouldn't have been able to pass the GED exam without the encouragement and support from the Learning Center and

particularly Nan.

She passed the GED exam and attended commencement in March 2002. "My parents loved it," Melida says. The ceremony showed her parents and two sisters that she really did it. "It made them cry."

Along the way, she left Big Lots in New Haven to work at other places. Notably, Melida did some bookkeeping at J.C. Penney and Kroger. Since April 2003, she has been the bookkeeper at the Maplecrest Big Lots.

Now Melida has worked out a deal with her fiancé. They'll get married, and she'll work his way through college. Once he's graduated, it'll be Melida's turn. She will go to college for an Associates Degree in Accounting.

# Literacy Alliance Pioneer Retires



Laura McCaffery receives a certificate and gift from Executive Director Judy Stabelli, recognizing her contribution to the Literacy Alliance through the years.

“Literacy has always been part of my life in one way or another,” says Laura McCaffery who retired from the Allen County Public Library after forty five years.

A reception held April 14 recognized her years of service. The mayor was there to read a proclamation. President Bush, Governor Kernan, Senator Bayh, and Congressman Souder sent congratulatory letters. Scores attended.

Laura’s work in libraries began, in fact, when she was in high school. She volunteered in the Bourbon Public Library, a place ahead of its time having for example *Esquire* out in the open in the ‘40’s. And before that “I probably made four or five trips a day to read” there. Laura adds, “I was probably the first person in Bourbon to read *Forever Amber* at the time it came out and shocked everyone.”

Through the years Laura’s service to library patrons and the community included reviewing books as the Q-lady, hosting a Readers Services television program called Potpourri, and working to establish the Nonprofit Resource Center.

She also helped establish the Three Rivers Literacy Alliance, serving in the early days as board member, secretary, and treasurer. About 1985, “we started thinking that the library . . . should do something about the problem of adults who could not read.” The librarians frequently saw adults who were poor readers. A committee was formed in the library. Research was done. Books were bought to set up the Adult New Readers Section. That work lead to involvement with the Fort Wayne Literacy Council and the Northeast Indiana Literacy Coalition, which eventually combined to form the Three Rivers Literacy Alliance. The agency resided in a church on Broadway at first. The Literacy Alliance then moved to the WOWO Building on Wayne and Harrison. There were tough times. For staffing, there was one part time employee, and the rest were volunteers including the Executive Director. “Money was really tight. At times I was terrified we wouldn’t have enough money . . . I was concerned we wouldn’t be able to pay” the one employee.

Laura’s local work against illiteracy expanded to the national level. She regularly contributed information to Public Library Association about resources for the adult new reader. She wrote a book, *Building an ESL Collection for Young Adults*.

When she retires Laura intends to take it easy. She’ll have more time for her hobbies—reading, gardening, collecting recipes. Her house has 14 rooms and she intends “to find out what’s in them.” She’ll also attend some of the library meetings around the country, keeping her hand in it for awhile.

# Workshop Prepares Volunteer Tutors

Volunteers gathered recently at Fellowship Missionary Church. As they entered the meeting room that Saturday morning, they picked up name tags and tutor resource packets that help teach reading to adults.

This was the first of two days of tutor training which the Literacy Alliance conducts regularly to prepare literacy tutors for One-on-One Tutoring and Adult Learning Center programs. Notably the Literacy Alliance has trained tutors for other programs, other agencies. Fairly recently, the Literacy Alliance has begun to train volunteers for English as a Second Language (ESL) tutoring in addition to the regular literacy tutoring.

In training, the Literacy Alliance uses trainer and participants’ experiences along with *LITSTART: Strategies for Adult Literacy and ESL Tutors*. The Literacy Alliance also integrates best practices and standards established by ProLiteracy Worldwide. The result is nationally sanctioned, standardized training for the volunteer tutor.

On the first day, the Literacy Alliance’s Literacy Coordinator Kathleen Benson-Chaney and Tutor Trainer Joe Haney talk about the role of the literacy tutor, the adult learner’s characteristics and needs, the resources for tutors, and how to get started.

The atmosphere is collegial.

# Announcements

## New Volunteers

The Literacy Alliance welcomes volunteers Tom Freeman and Lindsey Smith who have been at New Haven Learning Center since November. Other volunteers who have joined since January are Edgar Burritt, Rick Martell, Karen Quinliven, Julie Samek, and Caroline Shatto. Also, new to the Board of Directors is William Herx. The Literacy Alliance is deeply grateful to all the volunteers who contribute to the success of Literacy Alliance programs.

## TRLA Staff Present at IAACE Conference

Kathleen Benson Chaney, Cathi Counterman, and Elaine Gee will talk about the advantages of controlled intake at the 2004 IAACE Conference at the Grand Wayne Center on May 6. Site Coordinators at the Literacy Alliance's Learning Centers developed a system that improves student retention and outcome. The IAACE (Indiana Association of Adult and Continuing Education) promotes adult learning and development.

## Rotary Reads Wraps Up

The Fort Wayne Rotary Club wraps up the Rotary Reads Campaign, a three-year commitment to help fight illiteracy in the community. In 2002, Rotarians collected money for the Literacy Alliance, which aided in training volunteer readers and purchasing children's books for the Read to Me Programs. In 2003, they conducted a community wide book drive, involving a PSA and collections at all Scott's Food Stores. Nearly 800 books were collected for the Literacy Alliance's Books for Kids Program. This year, Rotary Club members are donating their time as Story Friends and fundraising volunteers. With deep gratitude, the Literacy Alliance recognizes the efforts of the Downtown Rotary Club of Fort Wayne.

Through group and role playing activities, volunteer tutors get to know each other and the concepts Joe and Kathleen are teaching. In the afternoon, they decide on whether they want to be literacy tutors or ESL tutors.

On the second day, which meets the following Saturday, volunteer tutors are split into their ESL tutor and literacy tutor groups. As Joe describes it, this second day uses a case study approach. Trainers and volunteer tutors look at learner profiles, determining what the learners' needs will be and looking at available resource material. "It's practical, looking at an individual."

Teacher Nan Wilson points out that both ESL and literacy tutor groups will serve students who need "comprehension strategies, decoding skills and vocabulary, but in different order of priority." She explains, "Literacy tutors teach a learner to read, always working within the context of a learner's goals and needs, using material that is meaningful to the student," a guiding principle Nan reiterates throughout the day.

Tutor trainer Jelena Statsenko talks to the ESL tutors about the ESL population in Fort Wayne and their needs. They examine what ESL material is on the market and how to match the material to the learners' needs. Jelena describes different levels of ESL proficiency and the skills ESL learners would need. She introduces activities to teach those skills and explains how to match the activities with the levels. Jelena notes that there is a lot of discussion about cultural issues and cultural sensitivity.

At tutor training, Jelena finds "a wonderful warm comfortable atmosphere."

## Mark Your Calendar

### April 24 & May 1

Tutor Training Workshop at ITT Technical Institute, 8:45 AM - 1:45 PM

### May 6

"Destination Matters," the Annual Community Celebration of United Way of Allen County

### May 6-7

2004 IAACE Conference at the Grand Wayne Center

### May 22

Three Rivers Literacy Alliance Gala Garage Sale at ITT Technical Institute, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

### June 9

Summit for local leaders with Dr. Reid Lyon at the Grand Wayne Center, 7:30 AM - 9:00 AM

### June 19 & June 26

Tutor Training Workshop at ITT Technical Institute, 8:45 AM - 1:45 PM

# TRLA Needs Your Help

*The Literacy Alliance needs donations and volunteers for a May 22 fundraiser.* It will be a Gala Garage Sale at ITT Technical Institute, featuring story times, book giveaways, and concessions.

**To make the event big**, the Literacy Alliance requests donations of nice, gently used items to sell. Anything sellable is accepted.

- Clothing
- Furniture
- Exercise Equipment
- Books
- Nicknacks
- Appliances
- Tools
- Etc.

**To make it a success**, dozens of volunteers are needed to help setup and operate the garage sale. Setup will occur:

- May 15, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
- May 21, 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM.

At the garage sale, volunteers will work in three hour shifts.

- Maintaining and Selling Merchandise
- Collecting Money
- Monitoring Story Times
- Staffing Concessions

## GALA GARAGE SALE

*with*

MYRIADS OF MERCHANDISE

CONCESSIONS

BOOK GIVEAWAYS

& STORY TIMES *with*

CELEBRITY READERS *including*

ED LAROCQUE, DIRECTOR OF

ALLEN COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

& SAM TALARICO, CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT



IF YOU HAVE ITEMS TO DONATE . . .  
TO VOLUNTEER FOR A SHIFT OR TWO . . .

ITT Technical Institute  
4919 Coldwater Rd.  
Saturday, May 22, 2004  
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

PLEASE CALL  
BRIAN AT THE LITERACY ALLIANCE  
426-7323

## From the Director's Desk

As we return to work after spring break, we begin the winding down process for our program year. Family Literacy classes will meet for the last time in May. New families will enter the program in September. Learning Centers will wind up the year in June, close for the month of July, and reopen for the new program year in August.

Staff members are focusing on what we call "post testing." That's our term for the final part of the assessment process that demonstrates bottom line results in all of our programs. Last year we saw 100% of our Family Literacy parents show improvements in academic skills, with many of them focusing on learning English. In our Learning Centers, 89% of the students who stayed long enough to complete post testing demonstrated gains.

I can't say enough how proud we are of the results that we produce for the adult learners who are able to study in our programs. Today though, I have a grave concern about the adults who would like to enter our Learning Centers but who must wait until a seat is available. As I write this letter, while 175 individuals are attending regularly and working on basic skills, another 123 are waiting for an opening.

Earlier this year, we were seriously concerned that funding cuts from several sources might cause us to limit opportunities even further by closing a learning center. Although we are not yet completely out of the woods, things are looking up. Thanks to generous support from many of you, we are in a holding pattern, and optimistic about being able to continue operations at all four centers after the summer break in July.

Our focus at the moment is on how to deal with those who are waiting for services. Can we find a way to operate one more Learning Center for just a few months to alleviate the waiting list pressure? Can we add two more evenings a week at a current Learning Center site? Can we use the Work Keys/KeyTrain software just given to us by the Workforce Investment Board to provide instruction for a few more people?

These are options that we consider as we develop strategies to meet the challenges of our mission to end illiteracy.

Judith Stabelli  
Executive Director

