



The Literacy Alliance

Literacy News

A quarterly publication of the Literacy Alliance

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Anchor Learning Center Student Billie Jo King used KeyTrain software to prepare for the GED examination which she took in November.

KeyTrain allowed Billie to go back in the lessons as much as necessary to learn them.

In August, Billie began at Anchor Learning Center and was ready to take the GED examination November 8 and 9 at Anthis Career Center. "Wow," she thought, "I'm finally doing this." She was a little nervous and excited. She thought she was the oldest person there until she really looked around at the others taking the test. She was glad to sit down and get at it.

Now, Billie waits for the examination results. She's confident she passed. "Breezing through" is how Billie describes the experience. "Completing parts of the test and moving on. I didn't leave any part unfinished and even had time to go back and check."

When asked about her next step, Billie says she's been thinking about going to school for culinary arts. She loves to work with food. She also thinks about going to school for human services, so she can work with other addicted people. Having been a restaurant worker, both cook and server, for 21 years, she leans towards the culinary arts.

In any case, Billie says she can wait until fall 2006. It's kind of late starting college this year, and she's still adjusting to being on her own since she left Hope House in October. She doesn't want to rush into anything.

Billie expresses gratitude for what The Literacy Alliance has offered through KeyTrain and Anchor Learning Center. Getting ready for the examination happened a lot quicker than she expected. It's helped her accomplish her goal and "get my life back together."

KeyTrain Helps Student Prepare for GED Exam

In June 2005, Billie began at The Literacy Alliance. The Literacy Alliance's Karen Limkemann had spoken at Hope House which prompted Billie to resume her GED preparation. She called Karen the next day and arranged to start the following week. Since the current program year was finishing up, Billie wasn't able to enroll in a Learning Center. She was eager to get started, so Karen set her up with KeyTrain in The Literacy Alliance computer lab. She felt anxiety and relief those first days. Mainly relief, she explains, because she was finally getting started on earning her GED which was something she always wanted to do.

Twenty years ago, Billie couldn't finish high school because she had to work to take care of her new baby. Later as a single parent, she could never find the time to prepare for the GED examination. Subsequently, her daughter had grown up leaving Billie with more time for herself. Her desire to earn a GED remained. It was "something to do for myself."

For Billie, KeyTrain was really neat. "If you didn't get something right, it'd tell you and show you." Though not used to computers, she picked it up pretty well. "I learned to type with two rather than just one hand." Soon, she was accessing KeyTrain through the internet on her friend's computer. "Once I got going," she says, "I didn't want to quit." She adds that KeyTrain allowed her to work at her own pace and as long as she wanted. As Karen points out, "With KeyTrain and internet access, students can engage in the learning process all hours. They are not limited to office or Learning Center hours." Also,

Volunteer Corner

The Literacy Alliance is blessed with so many wonderful individuals who bring the wealth of their experience--and passion--to their volunteer positions. Monna Lee Hill is someone who has integrated her passion for life into reading with children. As a Read to Me Story Friend, she reads to preschoolers at Early Childhood Alliance, providing a regular positive reading experience for the children.

Though reading to crowds of preschoolers every week sounds like plenty of adventure for anyone, a recent adventure typical for her involved a 25 mile bike trip which she completed one Sunday afternoon. At 75, Monna Lee is anything but retiring. Her message is that age should not be a limitation to pursuing what you love. Indeed, she has, as they say, "walked the talk."

A lover of the written word, she pursued her Bachelors Degree in Elementary Education at Saint Francis and followed this up with a Masters in Special Education while her children were young. She taught for Fort Wayne Community Schools, teaching 2nd and 3rd grade students for 30 years.

The Literacy Alliance was lucky enough to recruit Monna Lee nine years ago as she was leaving her teaching post. Since she already loved reading to 2nd and 3rd grade children, it was a natural move to read to 3, 4, and 5 year olds. Her first assignment placed her at the Early Childhood Alliance's St. Vincent's Villa, on the YWCA campus. She transferred with Early Childhood Alliance when they relocated to their new site on Wayne Street and has remained reading there to this day.

When asked for advice about becoming a Story Friend, her answer was direct and to the point, "The reader must genuinely like working with young children. . . and never forget who's in charge of the reading session."

To Monna Lee and all Literacy Alliance volunteers, we thank you!

Did you know...

Low health literacy is an enormous cost burden on the American healthcare system -- annual health care costs for individuals with low literacy skills are 4 times higher than those with higher literacy skills.

The health care industry estimates \$73,000,000,000 of unnecessary health care expenses are attributable to poor literacy every year.

Patients with low literacy skills were observed to have a 50% increased risk of hospitalization, compared with patients who had adequate literacy skills.



Adult students work on KeyTrain in September at The Literacy Alliance computer lab which volunteers from DWD Technology Group set up with recycled computers. With six computers, the lab can now serve twice the number of students who work on basic skills, English, and other academic goals.

Majority of TLA Students Seek GED

An overwhelming 94% enroll in Literacy Alliance Learning Centers to prepare for the GED examination, according to an October survey conducted at the agency's four learning centers.

The student survey is conducted every year to determine the programs' strengths and weaknesses. For the survey prompt "Please tell us why you enrolled in classes," students were invited to select all that applied to them from a list of choices. The majority selected "To get my GED," then 69% selected "So I can go to college or other form of advance training," and 57% selected "To get a better job."

Speaking about the 94%, Executive Director Judith Stabelli says, "The percentage demonstrates a specific need we are filling for individuals, and it shows the benefit our programs provide for the community in general."

In Allen County, about 34,000 citizens over 25 do not have a high school diploma or equivalent. Nationally, citizens at this education level earn about \$10,000 less than those who graduate, according to the 2000 census.

"Our programs benefit the community while helping these individuals," explains Public Relations and Marketing Manager Brian Schlichtenmyer, "because when our students earn their GED they're much closer to those next steps to more education and better jobs. Ultimately, they earn more money and can contribute to the economic health of the community."



Children and parents are captivated by Condra Ridley of the Allen County Public Library as she tells a story at the Rally for Reading at Hanna Creighton. The Saturday event drew hundreds and involved a variety of activities to promote reading.



Families participate in the Cake Walk at the Rally for Reading at Hanna Creighton on September 24. CANI Head Start, Fort Wayne Urban League, and Allen County Public Library joined with many other organizations to present the event.

First Rally for Reading at Hanna Creighton a Great Success

Hundreds attended the first annual Rally for Reading at Hanna Creighton. The Saturday event ran from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., featuring workshops, entertainment, and booths. All activities focused on literacy in an effort to raise awareness about the importance of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and understanding. The Rally for Reading was free to all and included lunch.

As Master of Ceremonies, Ethan Birch presided over the event which began with a Mayoral Proclamation presented by former Deputy Mayor Al Moll. Other activities included entertainment all day from Elmhurst and Metro Cheerleaders as well as Dinger the Dragon, Tick-Tock Reads Alot, and Kooka Bird. Visitors were able to receive free books and attend storytelling, puppet shows, a cakewalk, and other family events. All who visited sponsor booths were eligible for a free computer drawing at 1:45 p.m.

Sponsors included Allen County Education Partnership, Allen County Public Library, CANI Head Start, Citilink, Community Harvest Food Bank, Fort Wayne Urban League, Hanna-Creighton Neighborhood Association, The Literacy Alliance, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Synergy, and WFWA PBS39.

Participation in Hall's Fundraising Partnership Quadruples

Participation in the Hall's Community Partnership Card program quadrupled in November.

Beginning in October, The Literacy Alliance and Hall's Restaurants and Specialty Services joined forces to fight low literacy in Allen County. Staff, volunteers, and board members received a Hall's Community Partnership Card which earns a monthly rebate check for The Literacy Alliance.

When cardholders dine at any Hall's Restaurant, use Hall's catering service, order a cake from Hall's Take the Cake, have an event at Lester's Banquet Hall, or stay at The Guesthouse Hotel and present the card when paying their bill, Hall's donates 10% of the bill from a Guesthouse stay and 5% from any other dining or service experience.

Everyone is eligible to use the card which only works when it is used. Cards are available from Brian at The Literacy Alliance, 426-7323.



The Literacy Alliance Thanks Individuals and Organizations for Their Generous Support

Individuals

John D. Auld

Marjorie Baumgartel

Glen & Chris Bickel

Robert & Margaret Bliss

H. Carolyn Buckmaster

Rev. & Mrs. Robert Gevers

Leonard & Ruth Goldstein

Martha Hatch

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George & Therese Taylor

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Local 305 IBEW

Physicians Health Plan

Prophet Sisters Foundation

State Employees' Community Camp

Target

Trinity English Evangelical Lutheran Church

Wal-Mart Foundation

Waterfield Mortgage Company

Announcements

In October, the number of GED graduates from Literacy Alliance programs exceeded last year's number. In 2004, 47 students passed the GED examination. In 2005, 53 have passed the examination. The record number of graduates in a year occurred in 2003 when 55 Literacy Alliance students earned their GED.

The Literacy Alliance welcomes new volunteers Leatha Allen, Edward Chase, Sheila Cordea, Elaine Daly, Rose Farrell, Sheila Fountain, Kathy Gillespie, Joy Higginbotham, Shawna Kimmell, Gregory Noel, Cathy Scott-Slayback, and Jim Wrixon.

The next set of tutor training workshops will be held 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. January 28 & February 4, 2006. The location is TBA. For more information, call Kathleen at 426-7323.

The first annual Celebrating Literacy Commencement Event will be held February 15 in the Scottish Rite's Valencia Ballroom. Celebrating Literacy is a fundraising event where graduates and their families and members of the community can enjoy hors d'oeuvres and conversation before the GED Commencement in the Scottish Rite Auditorium.

The Literacy Alliance thanks PHP, Lincoln Financial Group Foundation, and Dulin, Ward & DeWald for the generous support and seeks additional sponsors for Celebrating Literacy. For more information, call Brian at 426-7323.

The second annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast will be April 21 at Sears Pavilion from 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Again, Literacy Alliance staff will serve breakfast to Literacy Alliance volunteers. Kathleen and Brian promise to have enough coffee on hand this year.

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Many people, even highly literate people, often have trouble understanding their healthcare coverage.

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Your name & logo could appear here.

Sponsor Literacy News, Support TLA

Here is a chance for your organization to support The Literacy Alliance. You can publish your logo and catch phrase along with other important information in the *Literacy News*. The *Literacy News* reaches 3,500 homes and business four times a year.

For more information, contact Brian at The Literacy Alliance, 260-426-7323.

To Sponsor the Newsletter

	1 - 2 Issues	3 or More Issues
5.00" x 4"	\$300	\$240
3.25" x 5"	\$250	\$200
3.25" x 4"	\$200	\$160
3.25" x 3"	\$150	\$120
3.25" x 2"	\$100	\$80



Bring your report card, a copy of your report card, or a letter from your school for 1 FREE ticket to the Komets game on February 4, 2006.

Comcast Komet 2006 Report Card Night

Students with an "A" or "A Equivalent!"

Watch the Fort Wayne Komets face-off against the Elmira Jackals for FREE!

7:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 4, 2006



The Literacy Alliance

Comcast of Fort Wayne will be making a donation To The Literacy Alliance for every student who attends!

From the Director's Desk

We are still raving about KeyTrain software, the language and math learning program that is aligned with the WorkKeys skills assessment used by employers. We can't stop talking about KeyTrain because it is making such a difference in our ability to provide instruction for our learners. This month we asked our adult student, Billie King to allow us to tell you about her experiences studying both at a learning center and in the KeyTrain lab in preparation for taking the GED exam.

Now that we have a networked lab in our administrative offices, thanks to technology volunteers from Dulin Ward & DeWald, five students can work in the KeyTrain at one time. We are able to offer instruction immediately to adults who are free to come in during the day and don't have to put off program entry because of our learning center waiting lists. KeyTrain moves ahead slowly for those who need more practice to acquire skills but also has to ability to move ahead rapidly for the person who can learn at a faster pace. Fifty three students have completed 648 hours of study already since our program year began in August.

Last month our lab services were enhanced even further when Phil Rigdon from Concordia seminary joined us in a work-study placement. Phil will work with new computer lab students both here in our administrative offices and at the Fellowship Learning Center.

Meanwhile, our other instruction services continue on. In 2005, 22 new tutors completed training and were matched one-on-one or set to work at a center. Since the beginning of the school year in August, 129 students have enrolled in our learning centers, 62 families in Family Literacy and 7 in our one on one program.

Although we have thanked you individually, we would like to take this opportunity to say thanks again to each of you who has contributed to support our programs over this past year. As hurricanes and earthquakes cause tremendous need in other parts of the world, your acknowledgement that the need in our community continues is appreciated.



Judith Stabelli, Executive Director



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The Literacy Alliance



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