



The Literacy Alliance

# Literacy News

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Winter 2005

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## Comcast Helps Trinity Learning Center Reopen

The Literacy Alliance Trinity Learning Center resides on the third floor of Trinity United Methodist Church on Putnam Street. From the parking lot, a flight of stairs leads to the sanctuary level. A broad open staircase then leads to the third floor. Students ascend these stairs every Monday and Thursday evening during the program year.

They began their twice-weekly ascents about six weeks later than usual this year. Trinity lacked the funding necessary to reopen. Site Coordinator Elaine Gee managed the delay with a letter to students informing them of the delay and promising they would be the first to hear when the learning center could be reopened.

According to Elaine, anxious students called almost daily asking if Trinity was open yet and when they could get started. One of those students was Robin Zion. In her early twenties, with red hair and a ready smile, Robin kept thinking about how she had to get back there. It was the only place that helped her prepare for the GED examination.

Robin had pursued her GED at adult education centers that felt like traditional classroom settings, many students and few tutors or teachers. When she began at Trinity, she felt confused. Though Trinity was “pretty mellow,” she felt uncertain about how many more places and how many more times she would have to try before she earned her GED. She kept asking herself, “Is this going to be my last try?”



Comcast Indiana Area VP Cindy Cade and Robin Zion flank a flip chart. Surrounding Comcast's logo are messages of gratitude from Trinity Learning Center student.

She soon found that at Trinity, she could work one-on-one with the tutors and teachers. “They sit down with you and don't leave until you got it . . . When I run into difficulty, I just call them over.”

She started at Trinity last year and became confident that this program year she would achieve her goal of passing the GED examination. “I thought about one more year would do it,” she says, underscoring the blow Trinity's staying closed had been to her.

At the end of September, The Comcast Foundation awarded The Literacy Alliance \$20,000 a year for three years, allowing Trinity Learning Alliance Center to reopen. Elaine sensed a stronger commitment from the students. “Once it reopened, students worked harder,” she explains. “They seemed more conscientious. Their attendance was better than last year's.” Elaine put Comcast's logo on a flip chart. Students quickly covered it with signatures and messages of gratitude, such as “Thank you for believing in us,” “. . . for the opportunity to continue my education,” “. . . for letting us succeed,” “. . . for your help and support,” “. . . for helping me achieve my goal.”

As Robin expected, she passed the GED practice test and received a voucher to take the GED examination scheduled for April. Earning her GED will bring her closer to her ultimate goal, becoming an American Sign Language interpreter and working with children up to 18 years old. “It's been my dream since I was in the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade at Elmhurst High School.” She plans to attend Ivy Tech this fall.



Adams Family Literacy students are ready for the Seuss birthday celebration on March 2, 2005.



With the Cat in the Hat hats, Adams Elementary students celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday and kick off Read Across America.

# Adams Celebrates Dr. Seuss's Birthday

Students from The Literacy Alliance Adams Family Literacy joined the student body to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday and kick off Read Across America. Despite a two-hour delay, everyone gathered in the auditorium at Adams Elementary, enjoyed music, and listened to speakers.

The Memorial Park Middle School eighth grade jazz band warmed things up. Everyone sang "Oh, the Things You Can Think" from *Seussical, the Musical*. Wearing the distinctive red and white hat, FWCS Superintendent Wendy Robinson said,

"With these hats we're showing how important reading is." On behalf of the mayor, Deputy Mayor Al Moll read a proclamation, calling March 2, 2005 "Read Across America Day" in Fort Wayne.

To conclude the ceremony, everyone streamed outside to greet the Cat in the Hat himself, arriving at the New Haven Avenue entrance with FWPD escort, sirens, and cheers.



FWCS Continuing Education Department Chair Jo Beth Chambers welcomes students and guests at the Scottish Rite Auditorium. Many students from The Literacy Alliance Learning centers were among about 80 GED graduates of 2004 who received their diplomas February 16, 2005.

## Announcements

The Literacy Alliance welcomes Joe Contrucci, Jimella Harris, and Susan St. Clair to the board. They join current board members James Davis, Karen Francisco, William Herx, Vicki Lee Johnson, Casey Schuerich, Joe Shade, Jr., Janell Sprinkle, Douglas Stephens, Laura Taliaferro, Brian Thomason, and Jean Vrabel.

Also, The Literacy Alliance welcomes returning volunteers Danielle Platt and Vic Chaney and new volunteers Lowell Caulder, Anita Dunlavey, Janice Eplett, Yvette Howard, Mary McDonald, Ward McDonald, Mary Anne Roach, Athar Safdar, Sara Sprunger, Anne Walker, and Paul Weber.

Report Card Night was a resounding success this year. Comcast donated \$7,500 to The Literacy Alliance. A record number attended February 5 when the Komets beat the Mallards.

A tutor training workshop will be held two Saturdays in a row, April 30 and May 7, 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM at Equal Opportunity Center, 3000 S. Wayne. Call Kathleen at 426-7323 for more information.

# Young People Donate to Books for Kids

Recently, two Hickory Center students organized book drives. Their separate efforts collected almost 400 children's books, which they donated to The Literacy Alliance Books for Kids program. Hickory Center had encouraged them to come up with community service projects.

First grader Matthew Meszaros thought of the book drive because he loves to read. He collected books from school, and his father set up a collection box at work. Third grader Chris Schutte wanted to gather books "to send to people who can't afford to buy books."

Books for Kids is one of the Read to Me programs. Donated books are regularly distributed to social service and medical clinic waiting rooms in the community. Children who visit those sites can select a book to take home.



*Chris Schutte with Read to Me Program Director Brian Schlichtenmyer shows books he collected and donated to The Literacy Alliance Books for Kids program.*

## Volunteer Corner

This month we are very pleased to highlight Mr. Darrell Jones. Darrell and wife Sherrie have two daughters, Lauren, 17, a student at Carroll High School and dance enthusiast, and Tamara, 25, a graduate student at Indiana University.

Darrell became a literacy tutor to share his love of reading and give time to the Fort Wayne community. At first, a bit overwhelmed upon completing tutor training, he became excited to begin when he observed tutors working at New Haven Learning Center. Within weeks of training, Darrell was matched with a student.

Darrell's student wanted help with literacy skills to strengthen his position at work and avoid a layoff. Nevertheless, obtaining a valid Indiana driver's license became the first goal. The student held a license from another state. To get the Indiana license, he needed a letter of release from that state. Darrell helped him write and receive the letter of release then helped him complete the written driver's test.

Receiving an Indiana driver's license changed the life of Darrell's student in subtle and spectacular ways. He has more confidence. His peers at work have begun to seek his guidance. His supervisor now relies on him as a team leader. He recently received a second pay raise and now has no fear of a layoff.

Early February, Darrell notified us that he will soon retire and also leave his tutor role behind. He plans to resume flight training which he had abandoned in his youth. Obtaining a private pilot's license is Darrell's goal. He attributes this renewed sense of purpose to his student who inspired Darrell to complete a very special mission.

Darrell's student has already asked him for a plane ride over Fort Wayne to take a look at his house. Soon, we can expect to see the two of them taking to the sky on a bright sunny morning, discovering new horizons together.

Thank you, Darrell! Congratulations on returning to your dream of flying!

# Thank You!

## The Literacy Alliance Thanks Individuals and Organizations for Their Generous Support.

### *Individuals*

Donna Allshire  
John Auld  
Marjorie Baumgartel  
Bart & Janet Bircheff  
Rachel Blakeman  
Peter & Katherine Blichert  
Robert & Margaret Bliss  
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May Rose Ceccanese  
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John & Mary Clarke  
John & Marlene Condron  
Joseph & Rami Contrucci  
Kenneth & Stephanie Dunsire  
Ann Eckert & Patricia Miller  
Janice Eplett  
David & Beverly Fandt  
Brian & Karen Francisco  
Cecille Gallant  
Pamela George  
Luke & Trinda Goings  
James Griffith  
Merle Grimm  
Barbara Hagy  
Jeffrey Halter  
Betty Jo Harper  
William & Sara Lee Hatlem  
Colleen Hawkins  
Dennis & Joan Headlee  
William & Marva Herx  
Linda Hugel  
Diane Humphrey  
Noel Hupp  
Rebecca & Judd Johnson  
Paul & Carol Kaplanis  
Gerry & Linda Kaufman  
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The Literacy Alliance



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# From the Director's Desk

The Indiana Chamber of Commerce's recent report, "A Demand-Side Strategy to Meet Indiana's Workforce Basic Skills Challenge," shows an estimated one in three employed Hoosiers have literacy skills below the minimum standard for successful employment in a knowledge-based economy. Figures for Allen County workers would not differ significantly.

The report also suggests that literacy services don't specifically address workforce literacy education. I'm proud to tell you that the Literacy Alliance does have a tool that targets instruction to workforce needs. KeyTrain software, donated last spring by the Northeast Indiana Workforce Investment Board, has modules for Basic Language and Math. The software takes a student, step by step, through increasingly more difficult levels of workplace-related technical instruction. It has been effective for literacy students, GED candidates, and adults learning English as a new language. Assessments show improved skills that transfer to the workplace.

KeyTrain correlates to the Work Keys skills assessment now being used by many employers in Allen County. Want ads list the requirement that applicants prove job eligibility through Work Keys. KeyTrain is the learning tool used to improve skills in those targeted areas.

Now that the Literacy Alliance has moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> with our use of technology to connect instruction to workplace skills, we are poised to move even further ahead. We would like to increase our capacity for instruction that the Chamber reports is so lacking in local programs. Our goal now is to operate a full computer lab equipped with KeyTrain software.

The excitement about our successes with KeyTrain comes amidst a continuing struggle to secure funds to operate our existing programs. Short on the heels of the news of the Comcast Foundation for our Learning Center came word that both federal and state budgets propose cuts in dollars for adult education. Though only about 10% of Literacy Alliance funding comes from government sources, any decrease in those dollars will impact our operations. Previous cuts from other funding sources cause us to continually live life on the edge.

We value the ongoing support that comes from many of you. It is critical to our ability to continue to provide instruction for Robin and her Learning Center classmates. It is absolutely essential if we are to grow our capacity to meet the needs that the Chamber report describes.

Judith Stabelli, Executive Director



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