



The Literacy Alliance

Literacy News

A quarterly publication of the Literacy Alliance

2007 Issue I

Judith Stabelli
executive director
judith.stabelli@fwliteracyalliance.org

Brian Schlichtenmyer
editor
brian.schlichtenmyer@fwliteracyalliance.org

709 Clay Street, Suite 100
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802

Phone: (260) 426-7323
Fax: (260) 424-0371

www.fwliteracyalliance.org



Literacy Alliance students Kellie Bendele (left) and Victoria Weinley (right) received the agency's first scholarships at the Scottish Rite Center on February 15. The \$1,000 scholarships were made possible through The Literacy Alliance endowment fund at the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne.

TLA Awards Scholarships at GED Graduation

Two days after the Blizzard of 2007, hundreds hurried around the piles and along the sidewalks, bundled against the cold wind. Some carried mortarboard caps and wore gowns under their coats. They were GED graduates with their family and friends heading for the Scottish Rite Center's Valencia Ballroom. As they stomped off the damp chill, they were directed downstairs where The Literacy Alliance's second annual GED reception was beginning.

Again this year, The Literacy Alliance worked with Anthis's School of Adult and Continuing Education to organize the reception which precedes the big event, the GED graduation commencement ceremony upstairs in the auditorium. The reception raises funds, promotes literacy, and celebrates the achievements of the community's GED graduates.

Over 400 adult students from Literacy Alliance and Anthis programs earned their GED in 2006. They came from different backgrounds and life circumstances. They overcame many obstacles to prepare for and pass the GED exam. During the evening, student speakers described those obstacles. Two of them were from The Literacy Alliance's Anchor Learning Center. Victoria Weinley spoke at the reception, and Kellie Bendele was one of the speakers at the commencement ceremony.

After Victoria spoke, Literacy Alliance board member Karen Francisco presented \$1,000 scholarships to her and Kellie. The Literacy Alliance was able to give scholarships for the first time through its endowment fund at the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne.

Last year, The Literacy Alliance deposited a substantial bequest from Wilda Gene Marcus into the endowment. The Community Foundation matched 20% of it right away. Some of the interest from the endowment made Victoria and Kellie's scholarships possible.

"The intent," according to Literacy Alliance Executive Director Judy Stabelli, "is to use interest in future years for scholarships for graduates." Donors can help by giving money to the Community Foundation for The Literacy Alliance's endowment. During calendar year 2007, the Community Foundation will continue to match 20% of new gifts to the endowment.

Scholarship recipients must plan to enroll at a postsecondary academic or trade school, since its purpose is to help the graduates make the next step in their education. Victoria has already begun at IVY Tech, and Kellie is ready to go to St. Francis.

After months and, in some cases, years of determined hard work, all of the graduates were able to share their successes. They enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and music in a warm, congenial place. Afterwards they adjourned upstairs for the big event of smiles and tears.

GED Reception Celebrates Graduates' Accomplishments



Hundreds attended the GED Reception and Commencement Ceremony event at the Scottish Rite Center on February 15, 2007. Attending were GED graduates, their family and friends, event sponsors, and Literacy Alliance staff and board members.



Everyone enjoyed light refreshments and a warm, relaxed atmosphere at the GED Reception in the Scottish Rite Center's Valencia Ballroom. Graduates and their family and friends shared their stories of determination and commitment before the Commencement Ceremony in the Scottish Rite Auditorium.



Speakers at the event included Literacy Alliance Executive Director Judy Stabelli (pictured), Literacy Alliance Board Member Bill Herx, and GED Graduate Victoria Weinley. Literacy Alliance Board Member Karen Francisco presented scholarships to Victoria Weinley and Kellie Bendele.



Victoria Weinley described the commitment and work which lead to earning her GED in November 2006. The Anchor Learning Center graduate scored so well on the GED exam that she received a scholarship from Ivy Tech. She also received a Literacy Alliance scholarship.

Announcements

The Literacy Alliance welcomes new volunteers Violet Abuya, Susan Borglum, Allison Bryan, Patty Buschman, Michael Butler, Mark Chepulis, Jill Clodfelter-Mason, Ramona Cohen, Tanika Collins, Margie Foote, Beverly Hart, Laura Hause, Christine Jones, Ruth Karau, Hla Khaing, Julie Niles, Julie Schraeder-Gettys, Marilee Stroud, Angela Witmer, Lakisha Woods, and Marge Wuliman.

Despite appalling temperatures, spectators packed the Coliseum for Komets Report Card Night on February 3. The event is held every year and rewards area students for getting good grades. Students receiving an "A" or "A Equivalent" received one free admission to the game against the Kalamazoo Wings. All in attendance saw The Literacy Alliance's Judy Stabelli receive a \$7,500 check from Comcast's Laura Rhoades and watched the Komets beat Kalamazoo 4-1.

Thanks to a grant from ProLiteracy through its National Book Scholarship Fund, The Literacy Alliance has been able to purchase instructional materials for its adult students who are at low reading skill levels. To qualify for the grant, The Literacy Alliance obtained funding for up to 20% of the total grant amount, specified the need and proposed use for the materials, and agreed to provide a follow up report.

Mark your calendars! On April 22, The Literacy Alliance will host its annual volunteer appreciation event. For the past couple of years, Literacy Alliance staff showed their appreciation by serving breakfast to volunteers at the Sears Pavilion in Foster Park. This year the staff will serve light refreshments to Literacy Alliance volunteers from 1:30 p.m. at the Lincoln Museum. After a few words of gratitude, volunteers will be invited to tour the museum on their own or with a guide.

The next set of tutor training workshops will be held 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. on April 28 and May 5. For more information, call Kathleen at The Literacy Alliance, 426-7323.

Volunteer Corner

Story Friends are the smallest of our volunteer groups and the most challenging in terms of recruitment. Part of this challenge is locating individuals who are able to read for an hour between 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon during the week. So we were excited in late summer 2002 to receive the initial call from Jane Beer asking about the Story Friend Program.

Jane had just retired from her position as a vocal music teacher at Weisser Park Elementary. She had found her passion early on, beginning with singing as a preschool child. At age 8, she began piano lesson and continued with both singing and piano until she was 20. Singing was an integral part of her life, following her through school and church choirs.

Her interest in becoming a Story Friend stemmed from the fact that she wanted to continue involvement with children, just not from a musical standpoint. Having no grandchildren in the area also fueled her interest, and once all the formalities were completed, Jane was matched with the Early Childhood Alliance preschool at Gethsemane Lutheran Church.

Jane may have retired from FWCS, but she certainly is not a retiring individual. When the buds on the spring trees start to bloom, her passion for gardening sets in. She is an avid bird watcher who feeds and cares for them during those long winter months. She holds an office in an educational and philanthropic service group, and volunteers on two boards, one for homeowners and one for homeless women. She also belongs to the Red Hat Society, an eclectic group of friends from church and former teachers who gather for breakfasts and lunches.

Jane and her husband Dave have four children, two living in northeast Indiana, the other two in Atlanta and Cape Cod. Her favorite hobby is, hands down, visiting her seven grandchildren scattered all over the United States.

When asked if there's something special she'd like to share with the literacy community, Jane declares that her mother read the Winnie the Pooh books to her so many times, she didn't even need to look at the words as she read them to her own children.

The Literacy Alliance appreciates the efforts of all of its volunteers. Many, many thanks, Jane, for all of your contributions and that infectious laugh of yours!

Thanks to Individuals & Organizations for Their Generous Support

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Many people, even highly literate people, often have trouble understanding their healthcare coverage. PHP makes it simple, and is dedicated to improving the lives of our neighbors and friends in Northern Indiana.

To find out how you or your organization can sponsor *Literacy News*, call Brian at The Literacy Alliance, 426-7323.

From the Director's Desk

As you read in our front page story, The Literacy Alliance board has decided to use income from a recent bequest for scholarships for Literacy Alliance adult students who pursue further education. The decision epitomizes our mission of enabling adults to succeed through literacy.

The value of a General Educational Development (GED) certificate lies in the doors that it opens. Appropriately, the GED is the sought-after goal of most adults in Literacy Alliance programs. Most employers won't accept an application from an adult who doesn't have a high school diploma. Most certainly, the door to higher education is closed to those who haven't graduated.

Our first scholarship recipients are taking advantage of those open doors by enrolling in college. Victoria Weinley is studying at Ivy Tech Community College. Kellie Bendele has been accepted at the University of St. Francis and will start in the fall.

Education has to be a lifelong journey. If we cannot understand and use the written word in this information age, we will be left far behind. Too many Allen County adults don't have the skills needed to continue their journey.

That's where Literacy Alliance programs enter the picture. Most adults come into our programs with 8th grade or lower language and math skills. A good number enter with skills below 6th grade level. With tutoring to help, childcare, and neighborhood locations we can help adults get over some of the obstacles they encounter.

We look forward to encouraging future Literacy Alliance adult learners to apply for our scholarships. We want them to use the skills that they learn in Literacy Alliance programs to venture down new paths.



Judith Stabelli, Executive Director



709 Clay Street, Suite 100 · Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802

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